

# FIRE POWER

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# FIRE POWER

FIVE RUTHLESS YEARS OF AIR FIGHTING HAD HAMMERED SQUADRON LEADER JOHNNIE JARVIS INTO A FLINT-HARD LEADER. BUT THE SUMMER OF 1944 WAS TO BRING HIM HIS GREATEST TEST.



A SPECIALIST IN LOW-FLYING ATTACKS, HE HAD BEEN ASSIGNED THE TOUGH JOB OF COMMANDING A ROCKET TYPHOON SQUADRON OF HARD-FIGHTING, HARD-TO-PLEASE CANADIANS.



# Chapter 1. ROCKETS AWAY

FOR JOHNNIE JARVIS, THE PEACE OF THAT SUMMER MORNING WAS WHOLLY BELIED BY THE GATHERING STORM HE HAD LATELY DETECTED IN THE MANNER OF HIS PILOTS.

HURRY IT UP THERE, YOU CHAPS!

THEY WERE SULLEN, RESENTFUL, NURSING A GRUDGE AGAINST THEIR SQUADRON COMMANDER...

NO DOUBT THEY'D LIKE A CANADIAN FOR A LEADER, NOT AN ENGLISHMAN, AND I CAN'T SAY I BLAME THEM. BUT IT'S MORE THAN THAT...



FLIGHT LIEUTENANT GRANT SCULLY, A HARD-BITTEN TORONTO MAN, WAS THE LOUDEST IN VOICING THEIR COMPLAINTS...

IT'S CRAZY THE WAY JARVIS MAKES US FLY LOW OVER THE WATER.

YEAH! TOO DICEY, BY HALF!



BUT NOT EVERY MAN SHARED GRANT SCULLY'S TRUCULENT OUTLOOK. THERE WAS "B" FLIGHT'S COMMANDER, THE GOOD-NATURED FLIGHT LIEUTENANT WESLEY GOODMAN.

AW! CAN IT, YOU GUYS! JARVIS HAS BEEN SENT TO DO A JOB-AND HE'S DOING IT!

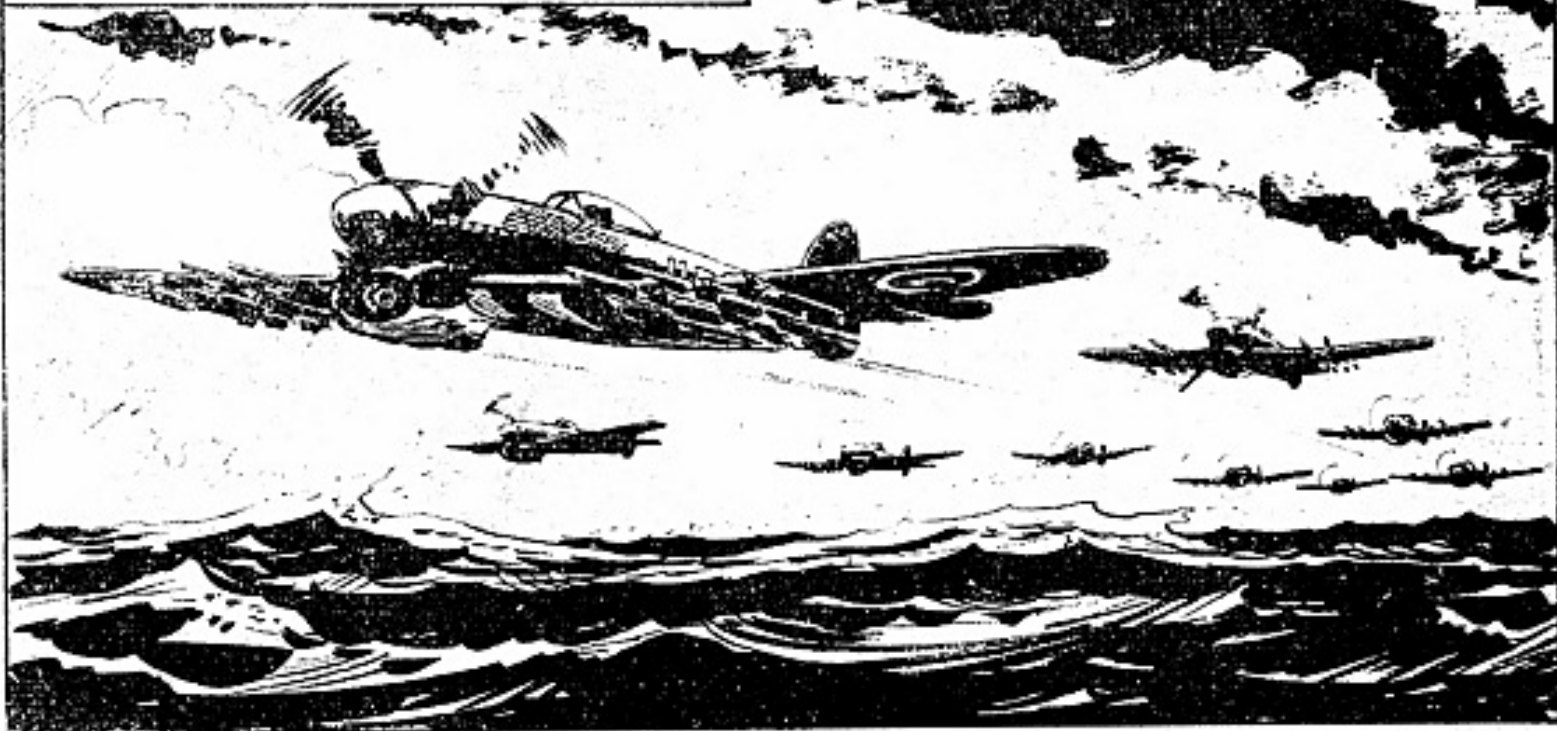


IGNORING FLIGHT LIEUTENANT SCULLY'S BLACK LOOKS, JOHNNIE LED THE SQUADRON INTO THE AIR WITH A THUNDEROUS ROAR THAT GAVE VENT TO HIS OWN SORELY-TRIED FEELINGS.

I DON'T BELIEVE IN FORCE, BUT IF THESE CANUCKS DON'T PULL WITH ME, I'LL HAVE TO USE THE BIG STICK.



THEIR TARGET WAS AN ELECTRICAL SUB-STATION NEAR ORLY IN FRANCE. ANY PILOT WOULD HAVE EXPECTED TO FLY LOW ACROSS THE CHANNEL TO ESCAPE RADAR DETECTION...BUT HARDLY AS LOW AS JOHNNIE JARVIS NOW TOOK THEM.



GOOD FLYER THOUGH HE WAS, THE STRAIN OF FLYING AT ZERO FEET FOR LONG PERIODS ALWAYS INCENSED THE QUICK-TEMPERED GRANT SCULLY...

BLAZES TAKE THAT JARVIS! YOU NEED SOME MARGIN FOR ERROR WITH THESE KITES...



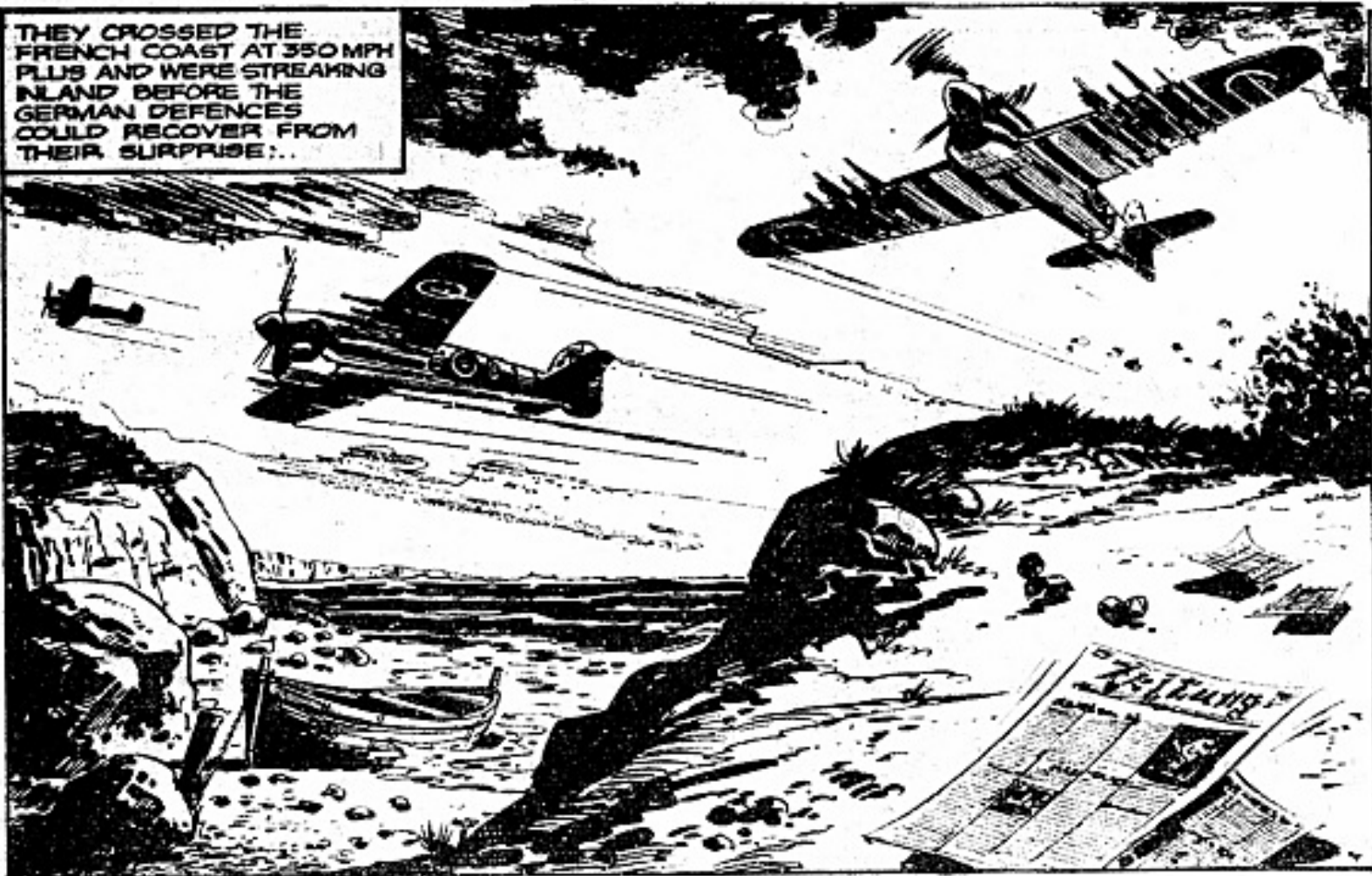
BUT JOHNNIE'S THOUGHTS WERE RANGING AHEAD EVEN OF THEIR IMMEDIATE TARGET ATORLY. SOON, THEY WOULD FLY ON ANOTHER MISSION-TO A TARGET WHICH HAD NOT BEEN DIVULGED EVEN TO HIM.

WHATEVER IT IS, IT'S GOING TO BE PRETTY DODGY... ACCORDING TO GROUP MAKE THIS SORT OF OP. A PICNIC!





THEY CROSSED THE FRENCH COAST AT 350 MPH PLUS AND WERE STREAKING INLAND BEFORE THE GERMAN DEFENCES COULD RECOVER FROM THEIR SURPRISE...



SKIMMING THE TALL POPLARS OF THE ROLLING FRENCH LANDSCAPE, JOHNNIE JARVIS BANKED ON TO A COURSE FOR THE TARGET. HE BROKE WIRELESS SILENCE...

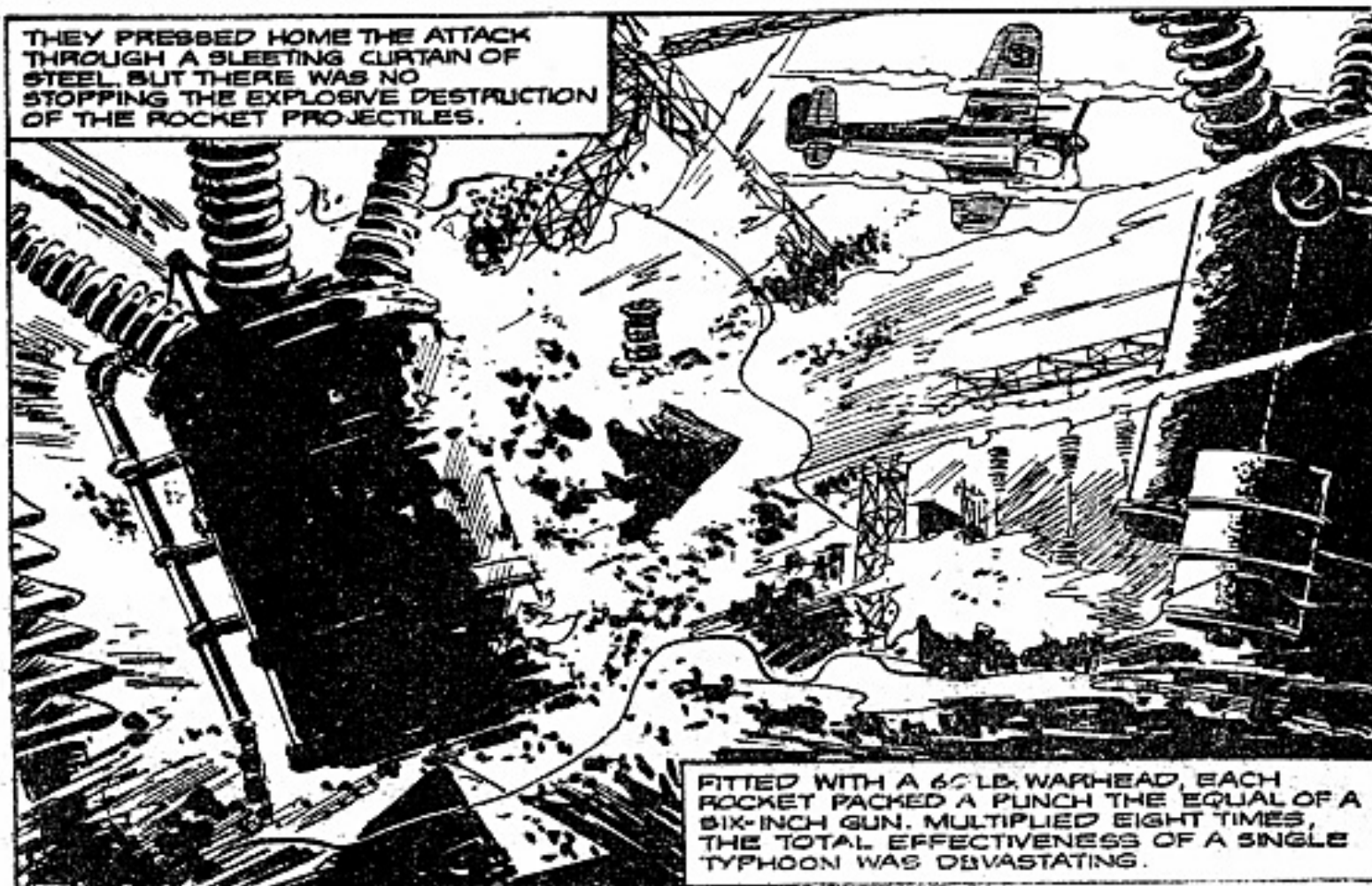
TARGET~  
DEAD AHEAD!  
SEE THE  
TRANSFORMERS?  
LINE AHEAD~  
FOLLOW  
ME IN!



THE TEARAWAY HISS OF JOHNNIE'S FIRST ROCKETS WAS LOST IN A SUDDEN CRESCENDO OF FLAK WHICH SAILED UP TO MEET THE TYPHOONS.



THEY PRESSED HOME THE ATTACK THROUGH A SLEETING CURTAIN OF STEEL, BUT THERE WAS NO STOPPING THE EXPLOSIVE DESTRUCTION OF THE ROCKET PROJECTILES.



FITTED WITH A 60 LB. WARHEAD, EACH ROCKET PACKED A PUNCH THE EQUAL OF A SIX-INCH GUN. MULTIPLIED EIGHT TIMES, THE TOTAL EFFECTIVENESS OF A SINGLE TYPHOON WAS DEVASTATING.



HAVING EMPTIED ALL HIS OWN ROCKETS INTO THE ILL-STARRED TARGET, JOHNNIE WATCHED THE OTHERS COMPLETE THE DESTRUCTION OF THE ELECTRICAL SUB-STATION...

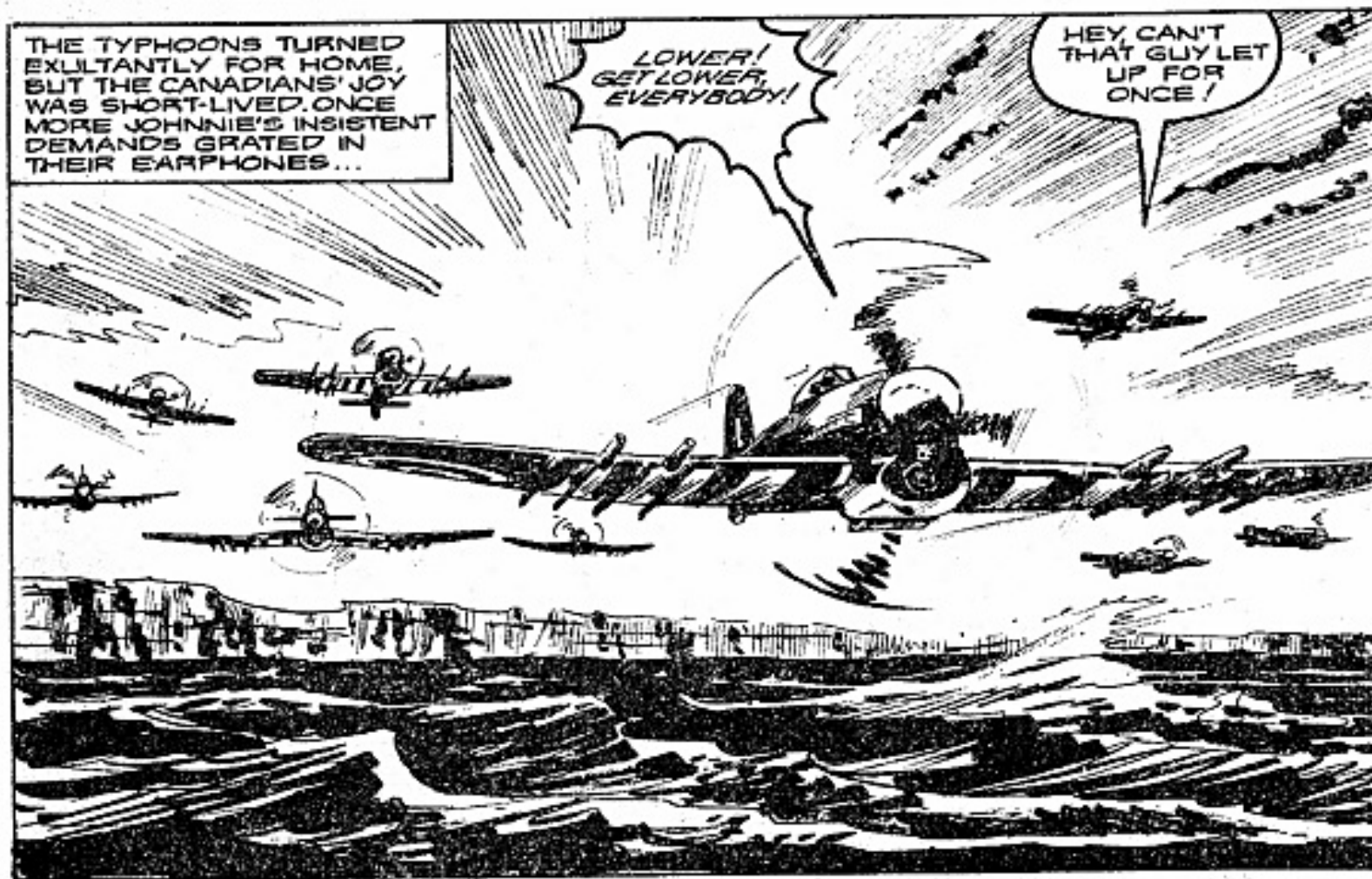
THESE CANADIANS MAY BE A SURLY BUNCH— BUT THEY CAN CERTAINLY FLY!



THE TYPHOONS TURNED EXULTANTLY FOR HOME, BUT THE CANADIANS' JOY WAS SHORT-LIVED. ONCE MORE JOHNNIE'S INSISTENT DEMANDS GRATED IN THEIR EARPHONES...

LOWER! GET LOWER, EVERYBODY!

HEY CAN'T THAT GUY LET UP FOR ONCE!



## Fire Power

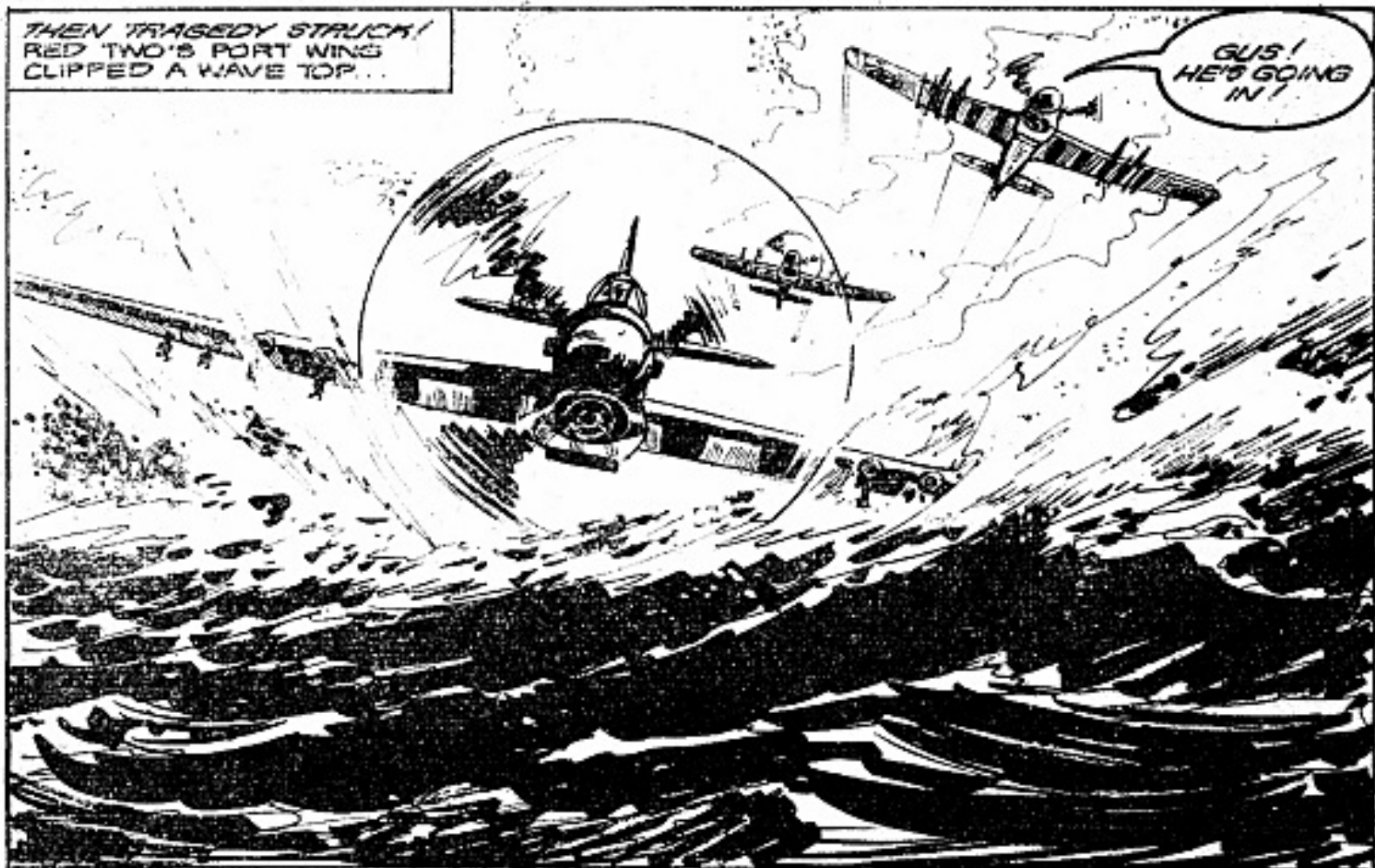
THE SLOW DRAWL OF THE MORE AMIABLE WESLEY GOODMAN BROKE IN TO GIVE JOHNNIE MUCH NEEDED SUPPORT...

DON'T YOU FELLAS EVER LEARN SENSE? THIS IS GOOD PRACTICE...SO GET LOW!



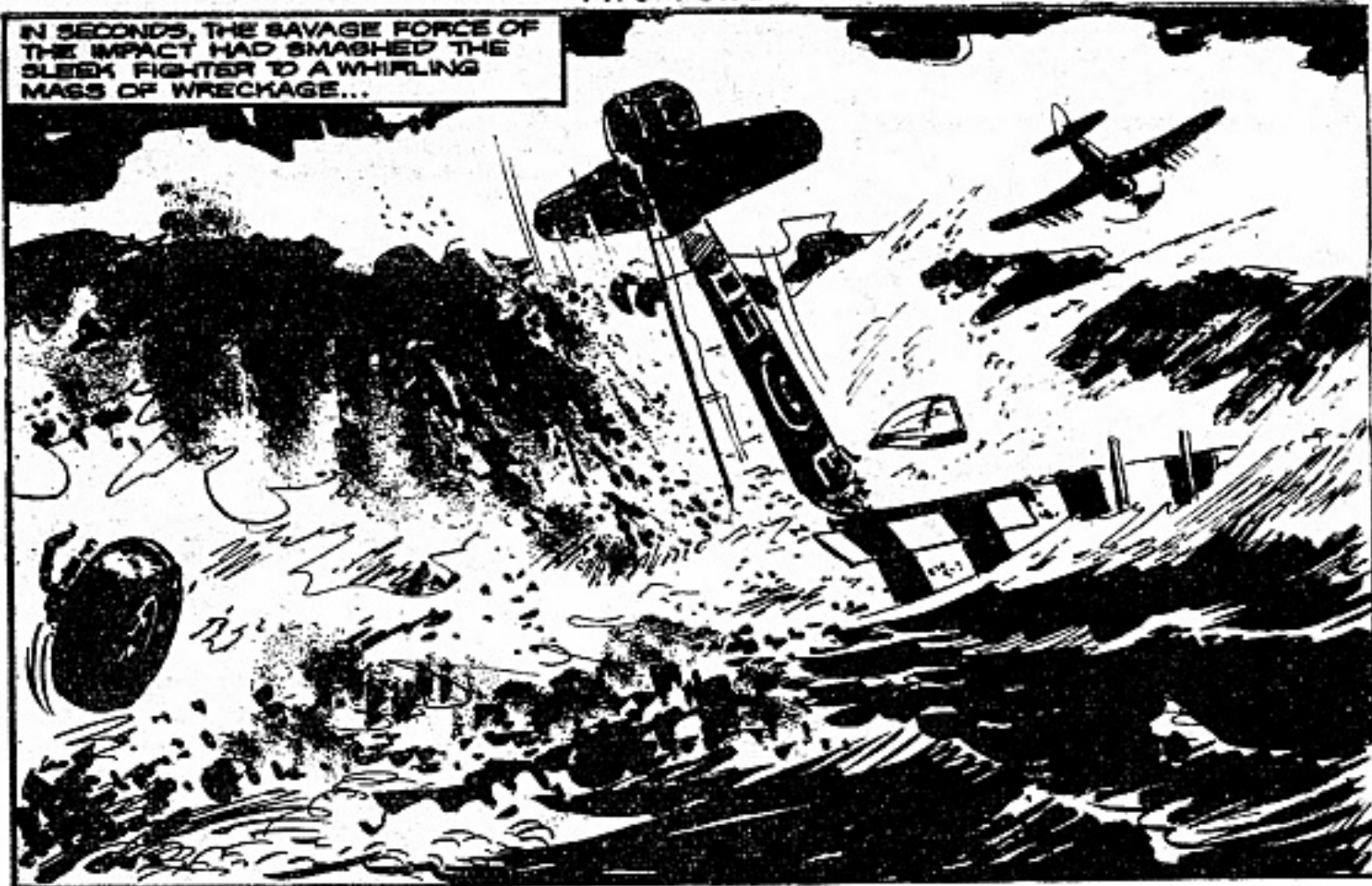
THEN TRAGEDY STRUCK!  
RED TWO'S PORT WING  
CLIPPED A WAVE TOP...

GLIS!  
HE'S GOING  
IN!





IN SECONDS, THE SAVAGE FORCE OF THE IMPACT HAD SMASHED THE SLEEK FIGHTER TO A WHIRLING MASS OF WRECKAGE...



THE HORRIFIED PILOTS COULD DO NOTHING BUT CIRCLE HELPLESSLY. THEIR MINDS WERE FILLED WITH A DREAD VISION OF THEIR FRIENDS TERRIFYING END IN THOSE COLD GREEN DEPTHS.

GOOD GRIEF / HE WAS GONE IN A SECOND!

DIDN'T HAVE A CHANCE!



WHEN THEY REACHED BASE, JOHNNIE FOUND HIMSELF THE STORM-CENTRE OF BITTER ACCUSATIONS...

YOU AS GOOD AS KILLED GUS BAKER, JARVIS/THE OP. WAS OVER-WHY RISK OUR NECKS ON DARN FOOL UNNECESSARY LOW FLYING! IT WAS PLAIN MURDER!



DESPITE THE SHOCK OF THE LOSS, JOHNNIE FELT HIS OWN ANGER MOUNTING WITHIN HIM. BUT ONCE AGAIN, THE SOOTHING DRAWL OF WESLEY GOODMAN CUT IN...

THAT'S STUPID TALK, GRANT/LOW FLYING'S OUR BUSINESS-IT SAVES OUR NECKS/ALL THE MORE REASON THAT WE SHOULD PRACTISE ALL WE CAN.



YOU'LL BE GLAD OF EVERY BIT OF LOW FLYING PRACTICE YOU CAN GET BEFORE LONG. I CAN'T SAY MORE...



WITH TEMPER'S BARELY COOLING, THE CANADIANS MADE OFF TO THE MESS. AS JOHNNIE FOLLOWED, HE FOUND WESLEY GOODMAN STILL BESIDE HIM...

TAKE NO NOTICE OF THEM, JOHNNIE. GUS HAS BEEN WITH US A LONG TIME. THEY DON'T LIKE SEEING HIM GO THAT WAY. IT SEEMS A PITY THE BOYS CAN'T BE TOLD THIS SPECIAL TARGET YOU HINTED AT. MIGHT MAKE THINGS KINDA EASIER.

NOT A CHANCE, WES... A LEAK MIGHT WARN THE ENEMY JUST HOW NEAR THE INVASION IS.



LOW-LEVEL ATTACK WORK WAS ONE OF THE MOST DANGEROUS JOBS OF THE FLYING WAR. JOHNNIE COULD UNDERSTAND WHY THESE MEN RESENTED ANY SEEMINGLY UNNECESSARY RISKS...

THEY'RE A TOUGH MOB... BUT IT'S A TOUGH JOB. WHATEVER THIS MISSION IS, IF IT CAN BE DONE, THESE BOYS WILL DO IT!



## Chapter 2.

## TENSION MOUNTS

AFTER THAT TRAGIC INCIDENT, THERE FOLLOWED DAYS OF BARELY-CONCEALED RANCOUR. THEN CAME A CHANGE IN ROUTINE ...



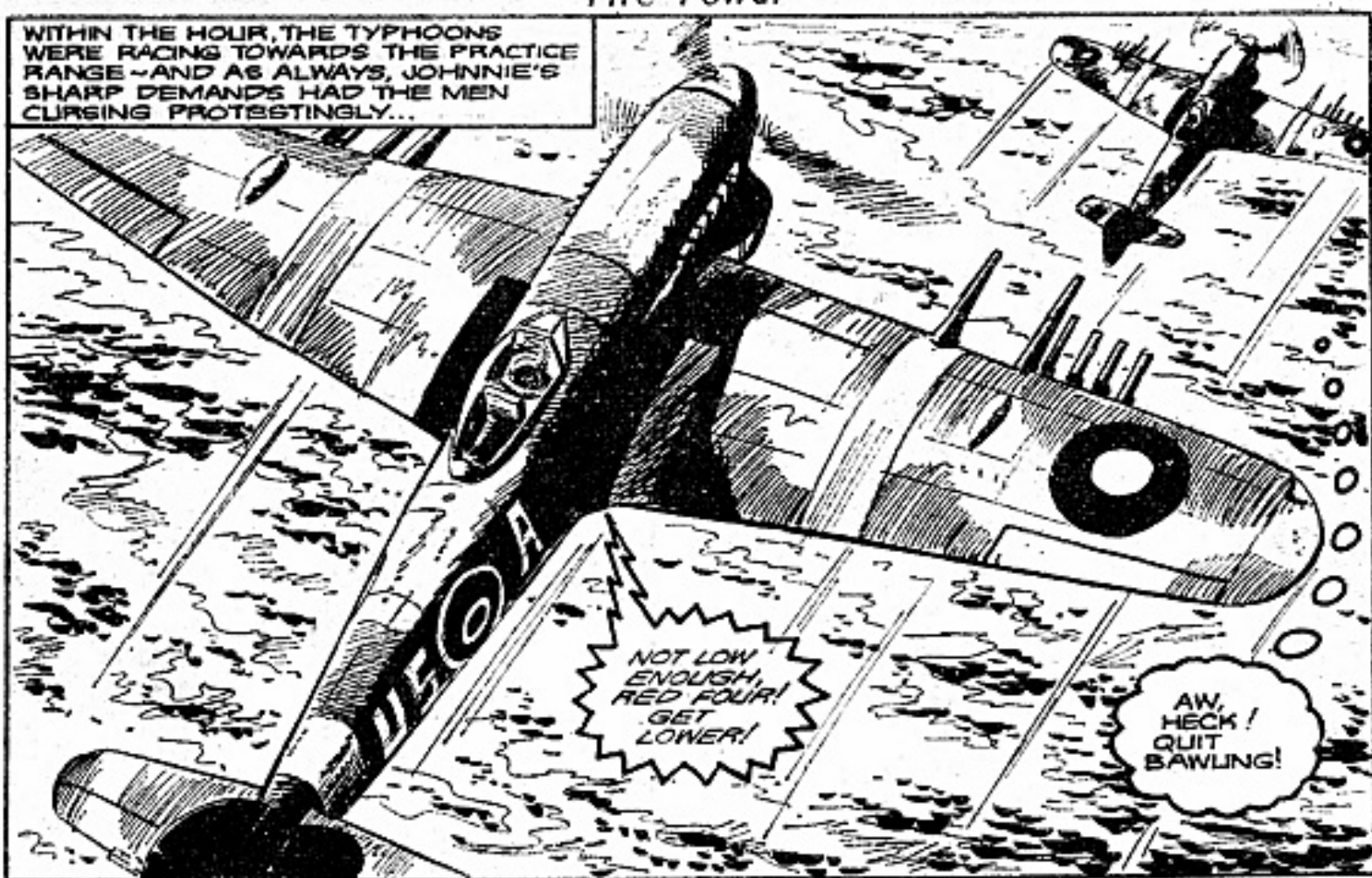
JOHNNIE JARVIS WENT ON TO DESCRIBE THE PRACTICE TARGET WHICH HE HAD ALREADY SEEN. IT WAS A HUGE STRIPED SQUARE PAINTED ON THE FACE OF A ROCKY ISLET HALF A MILE OFF THE DORSET COAST.



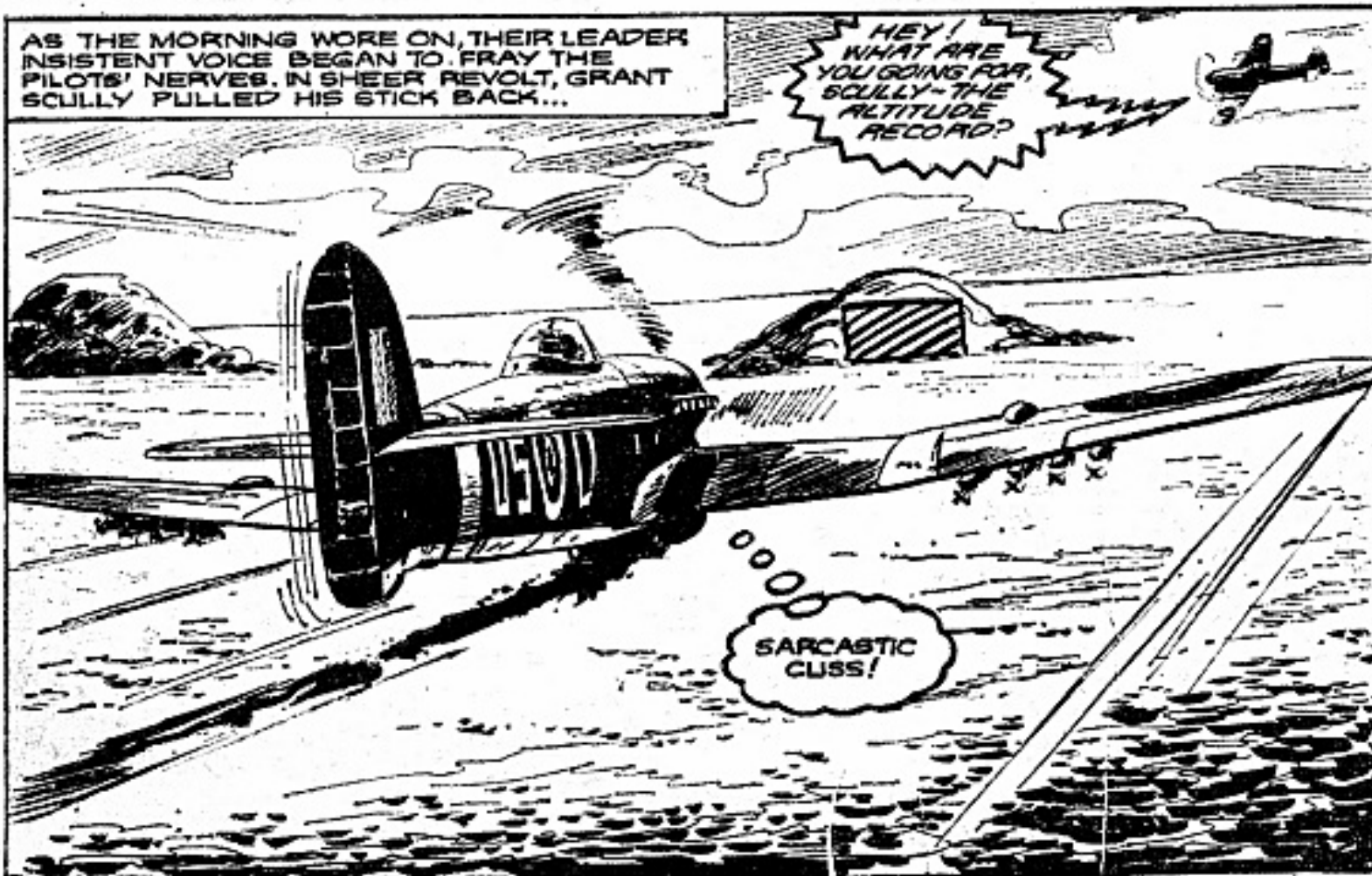
THE SIGNIFICANT FEATURE ABOUT THIS TARGET, AS JOHNNIE POINTED OUT, WAS THAT IT REACHED RIGHT DOWN TO SEA LEVEL.



WITHIN THE HOUR, THE TYPHOONS WERE RACING TOWARDS THE PRACTICE RANGE - AND AS ALWAYS, JOHNNIE'S SHARP DEMANDS HAD THE MEN CURSING PROTESTINGLY...



AS THE MORNING WORE ON, THEIR LEADER INSISTENT VOICE BEGAN TO FRAY THE PILOTS' NERVES. IN SHEER REVOLT, GRANT SCULLY PULLED HIS STICK BACK...



SCULLY SNARLED INTO HIS MICROPHONE IN A FIT OF SUDDEN ANGER...



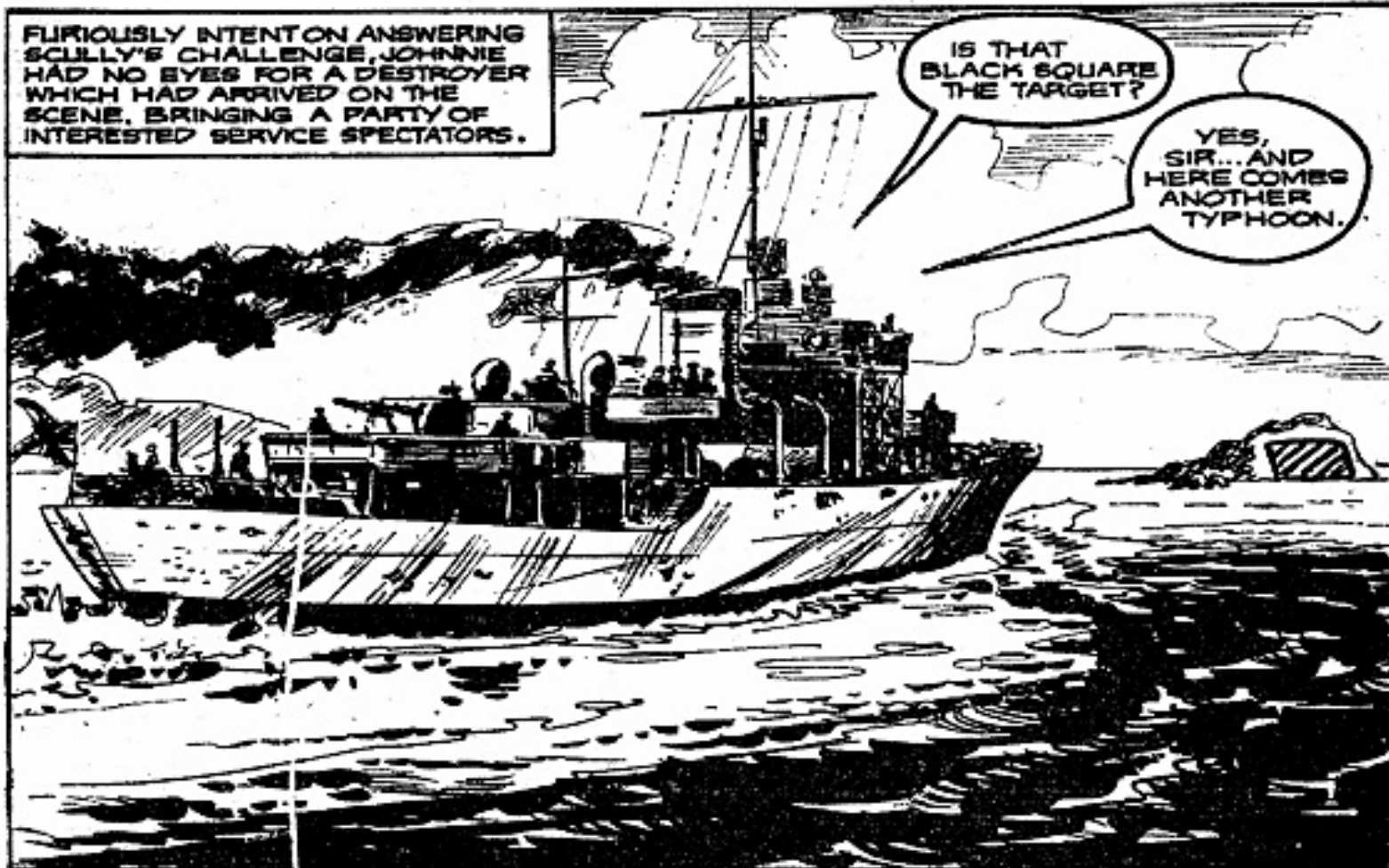
WHY DON'T  
YOU COME DOWN  
AND SHOW US  
INSTEAD OF  
STICKING UP THERE,  
NICE AND  
SAFE!

JOHNNIE'S  
REACTION WAS  
INSTANTANEOUS.

RIGHT,  
BY GLORY...  
I'LL SHOW  
THE LOT  
OF YOU!



FURIOUSLY INTENT ON ANSWERING  
SCULLY'S CHALLENGE, JOHNNIE  
HAD NO EYES FOR A DESTROYER  
WHICH HAD ARRIVED ON THE  
SCENE, BRINGING A PARTY OF  
INTERESTED SERVICE SPECTATORS.



IS THAT  
BLACK SQUARE  
THE TARGET?

YES,  
SIR...AND  
HERE COMES  
ANOTHER  
TYPHOON.



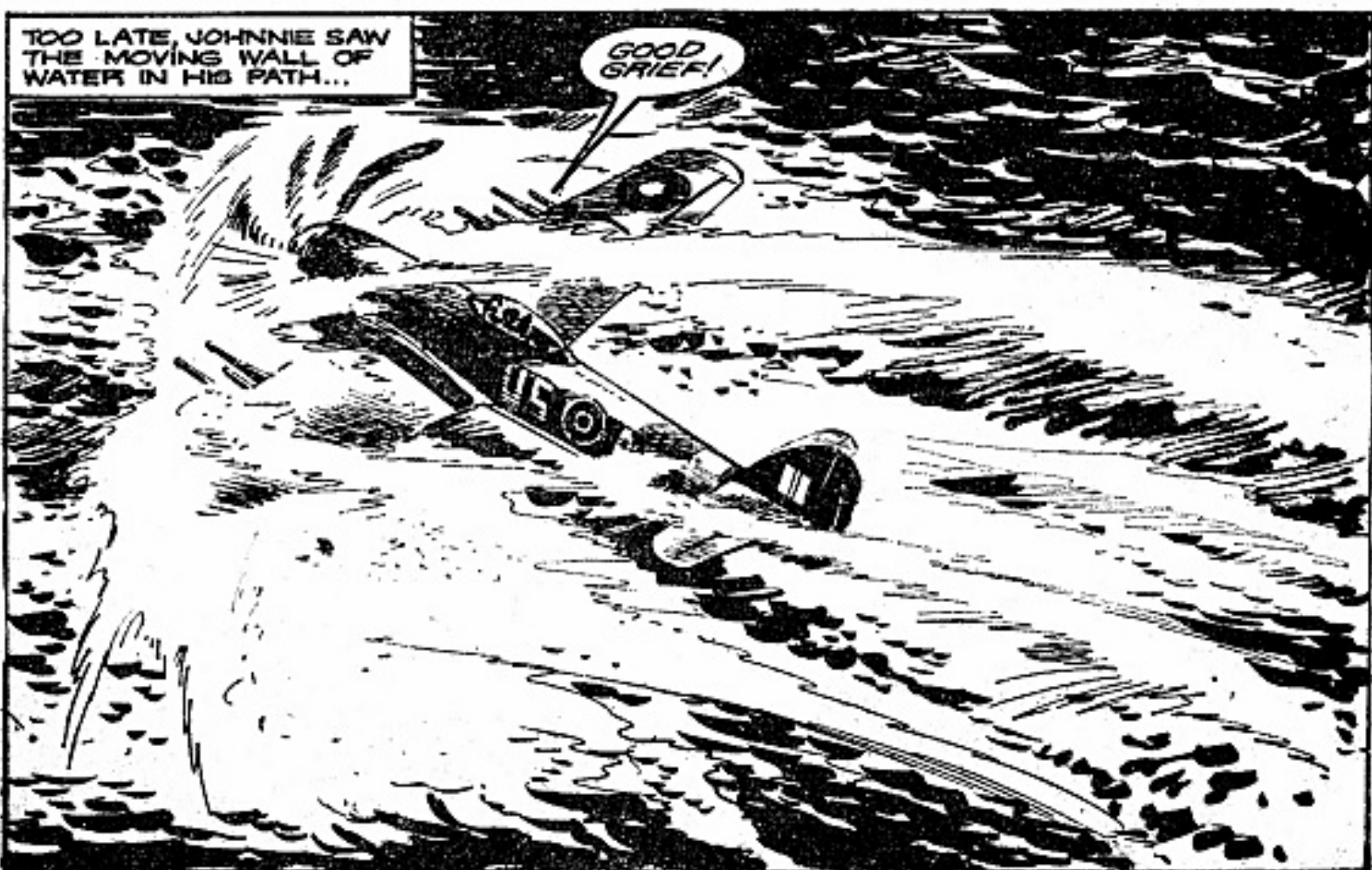
UNNOTICED, THE DESTROYER'S  
BOWS HAD SET UP A  
RIPPLING WAVE WHICH CREPT  
ACROSS JOHNNIE'S WATER-  
FLAT APPROACH TO THE  
TARGET...

I'LL SHOW  
SCULLY AND  
CO. JUST  
WHAT ZERO  
FLYING  
REALLY IS!

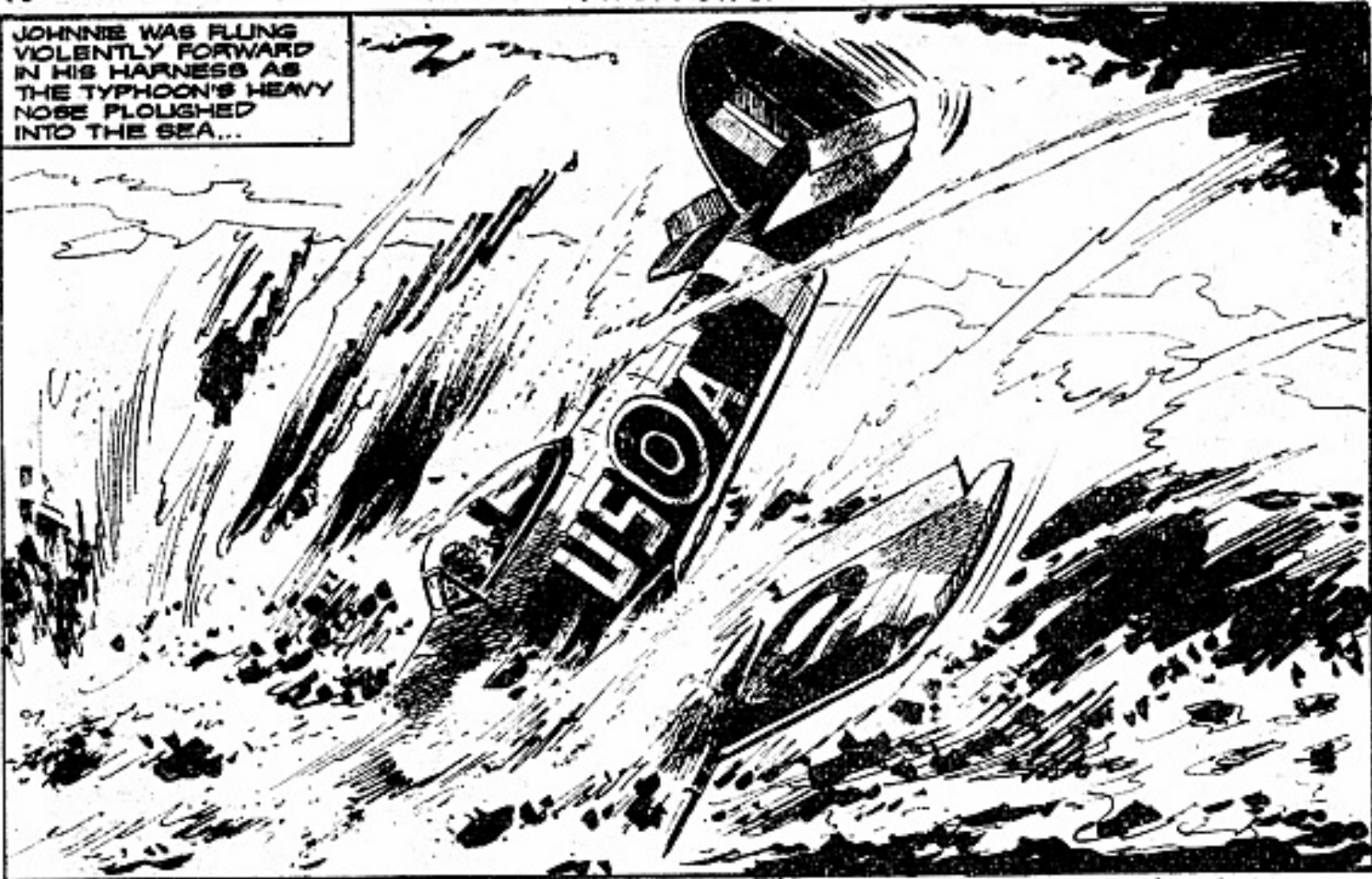


TOO LATE, JOHNNIE SAW  
THE MOVING WALL OF  
WATER IN HIS PATH...

GOOD  
GRIEF!



JOHNNIE WAS FLUNG  
VIOLENTLY FORWARD  
IN HIS HARNESS AS  
THE TYPHOON'S HEAVY  
NOSE PLOUGHED  
INTO THE SEA...



NEXT MOMENT, THE ROARING  
WATERS CLOSED OVER THE  
COCKPIT AS THE PLANE  
PLUNGED BENEATH THE  
SURFACE. FRANTICALLY,  
JOHNNIE STRUGGLED TO  
FREE HIMSELF...





WITH THE BRUTE FORCE OF PANIC, HE FORCED THE COCKPIT COVER OPEN, THEN FOUND HIMSELF CAUGHT BY HIS PARACHUTE HARNESS. HE THUMPED DESPERATELY AT THE CENTRAL CATCH AND THE STRAPS FLEW APART...



HIS HEAD REELING FROM LACK OF AIR, JOHNNIE FOUGHT HIS WAY UPWARDS...



AFTER WHAT SEEMED AN ETERNITY, HE BROKE SURFACE, HIS LUNGS GASPING AGONISINGLY FOR LIFE-GIVING AIR...



THE DESTROYER'S COMMANDER HAD ACTED SWIFTLY. ALREADY, THE SHIP'S WHALER WAS RACING TO THE SCENE, AND JOHNNIE WAS HAILED FROM THE SEA BY WILLING HANDS.

RIGHT, LIE HIM FLAT AND GET THE WATER OUT OF HIS LUNGS!

AYE, AYE, SIR.



JOHNNIE WAS CARRIED BACK TO STATION SICK-QUARTERS, BUT NO ADVICE OF THE MEDICAL OFFICER COULD KEEP HIM THERE. IT WAS TYPICAL OF WESLEY GOODMAN TO BE THE FIRST TO GREET THE SQUADRON LEADER'S REAPPEARANCE...

HOW ARE YOU, SKIPPER? BY GOLLY, YOU MUST BE THE IRON MAN HIMSELF!

F.



I FEEL OKAY, WES. LET'S GET BACK TO WORK!



IF THE REST OF THE SQUADRON FELT ANY SYMPATHY, THEIR FACES DID NOT SHOW IT. WESLEY GOODMAN HAD A QUICK WORD WITH HIS LEADER...

DON'T MIND THE BOYS TOO MUCH, SKIPPER. THEY RECKON YOUR ACCIDENT IS JUST ANOTHER REASON WHY THEY SHOULD QUIT THIS LOW-LEVEL FLYING.

I'LL SPEAK TO THEM.



JOHNNIE LET GRANT SCILLY HAVE HIS SAY FIRST...

SO WE GO LOW... BUT NOT SO TARNATION LOW AS TO LEAVE A MAN NO CHANCE IF HE SLIPS... LIKE WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU.

YEAH, THAT'S RIGHT, SKIP!

MAKES SENSE TO US!



LOOKING INTO THOSE HARD-BONED CANADIAN FACES, FLUSHED WITH INDIGNATION, JOHNNIE JARVIS KNEW THAT HE DARE NOT YIELD AN INCH TO HIS PILOTS...

I WISH I COULD AGREE WITH YOU. BUT I'M TOLD THAT OUR ROCKETS WILL NEVER HIT THIS SPECIAL TARGET UNLESS WE DO FLY AT WATER LEVEL.

GRANT SCULLY CAME CLOSE, HIS EYES BLACK PINPOINTS OF ANGER...

YOU MEAN YOU'LL RISK SOMEBODY ELSE DYING IT?

I MEAN JUST THAT, SCULLY!





GIVING JOHNNIE A LONG HOSTILE STARE, GRANT SCULLY SAID NO MORE BUT LED THE OTHERS AWAY. THE SQUADRON LEADER WATCHED THEM GO, FILLED WITH MISGIVINGS...

IF SOMEBODY ELSE DOES BUY IT, THERE'LL BE THE DEVIL TO PAY FROM THESE CANUCKS.



THAT NIGHT, SLEEP CAME HARD TO JOHNNIE JARVIS AS HE RE-LIVED THOSE HORRIFYING MOMENTS OF HIS PLUNGE BENEATH THE WAVES...

SCULLY'S RIGHT...ONE SLIP AND YOU'VE HAD IT!



IT HAD HAPPENED SO SUDDENLY, SO EASILY. HOW COULD HE DRIVE THESE MEN IN SUICIDALLY LOW-LEVEL FLYING WITH THE MEMORY OF THAT EXPERIENCE FRESH IN HIS MIND?

## Chapter 3.

## THIRD VICTIM

THE NEXT DAY, RED-EYED FROM LOSS OF SLEEP, JOHNNIE JARVIS WAS CALLED TO THE BRIEFING ROOM. THE INTELLIGENCE OFFICER GREETED HIM WITH AN OPERATIONAL ORDER...

IT SEEMS COMMAND ARE SWITCHING YOU BACK TO LIVE TARGETS, JOHNNIE... HERE'S A PICTURE OF IT.

GOOD HEAVENS, IT LOOKS LIKE A SEASIDE PIER!



JOHNNIE WENT OVER THE DETAILS WITH THE OTHER AND THEN CALLED A BRIEFING. FACING THOSE UNFRIENDLY FACES, THE SQUADRON LEADER FOUND THAT NOT EVEN THE STRANGE NATURE OF THEIR TARGET COULD RAISE A SMILE...

IT'S AN ORDINARY SEASIDE PIER BUT STRENGTHENED AND ARMED WITH A BATTERY OF TWENTY-MILLIMETRE FLAK. HERE IS A PICTURE OF IT WHICH YOU CAN ALL STUDY. THE OBJECT OF THE ATTACK IS TO PUNCH THE PIER'S LEGS FROM UNDER IT.





GRIMLY, HE  
PRESSED ON.

AS YOU  
CAN GUESS,  
THE ONLY WAY  
YOU'LL DO IT  
WILL BE TO GO  
IN ABSOLUTELY  
FLAT ON THE  
WATER.



NOTHING MORE  
WAS SAID AND  
JOHNNIE FOLLOWED  
THE TIGHT-LIPPED  
PILOTS OUT ON TO  
THE TARMAC,  
WATCHING THEM  
MOUNT INTO THEIR  
WAITING AIRCRAFT,  
HIS OWN NEW-  
FOUND DREAD  
CAME CROWDING  
BACK...

IT'S UP TO ME TO GO IN REALLY  
LOW AND SHOW THESE  
BEGGARS. BUT IF THE SEA'S  
CHOPPY...IF I JUST CLIP AN  
UNLUCKY WAVE-TOP...

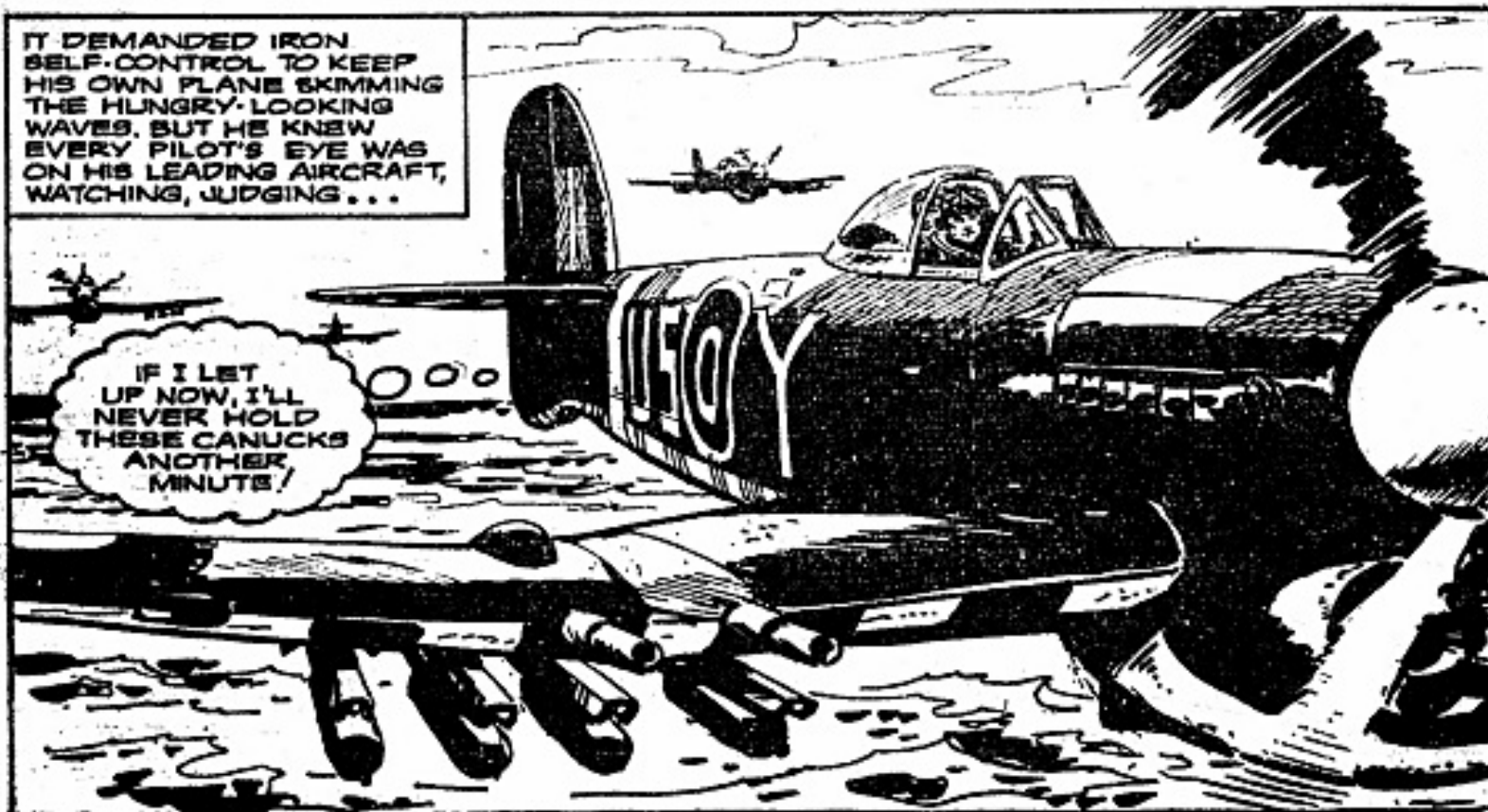


THANKFUL THAT THERE WAS NO PROLONGED WAITING IN WHICH HIS FEARS MIGHT GROW, SQUADRON LEADER JARVIS LED HIS TYPHOON SQUADRON SCREAMING OFF THE RUNWAY.



IT DEMANDED IRON SELF-CONTROL TO KEEP HIS OWN PLANE SKIMMING THE HUNGRY-LOOKING WAVES, BUT HE KNEW EVERY PILOT'S EYE WAS ON HIS LEADING AIRCRAFT, WATCHING, JUDGING...

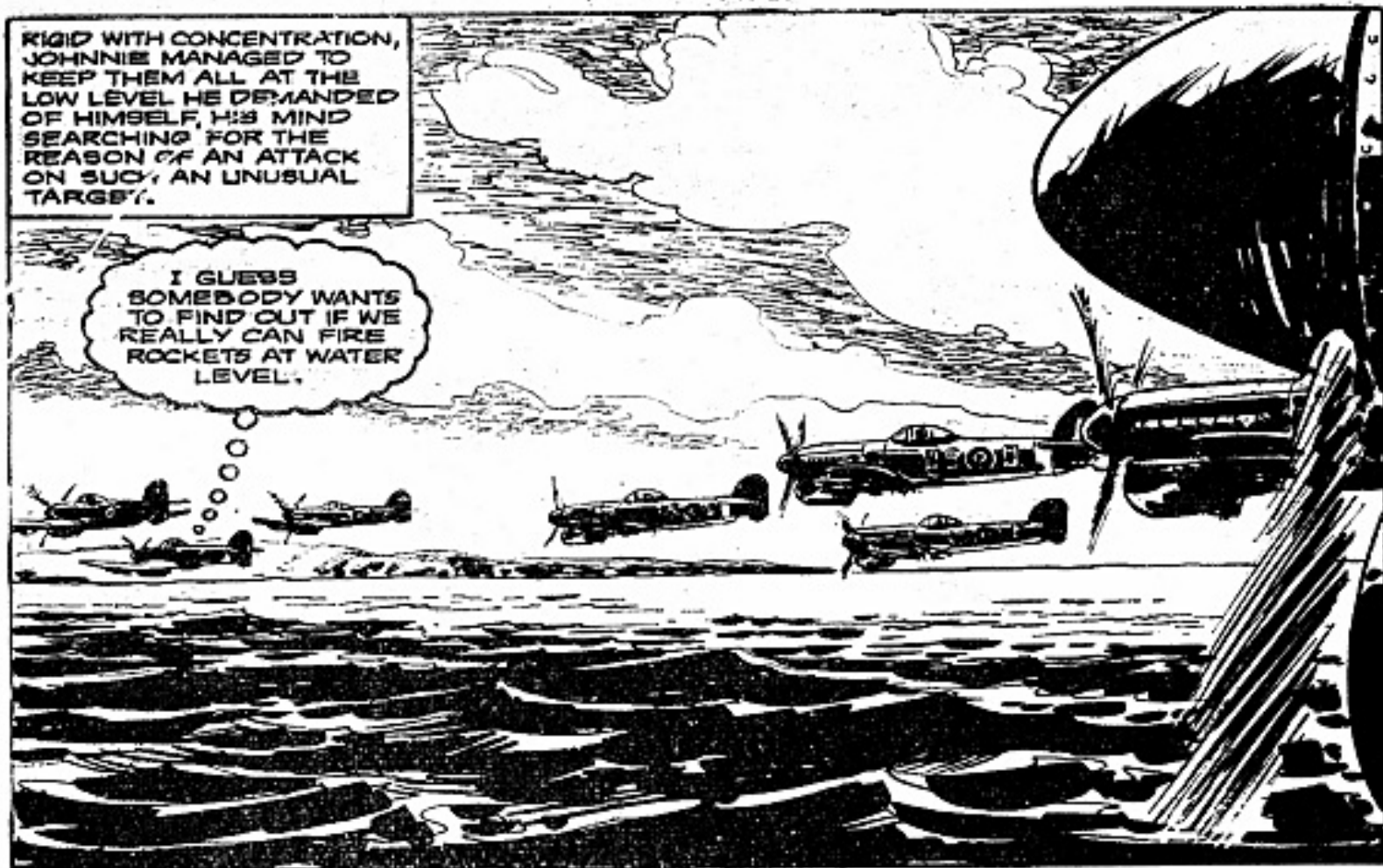
IF I LET UP NOW, I'LL NEVER HOLD THESE CANUCKS ANOTHER MINUTE!





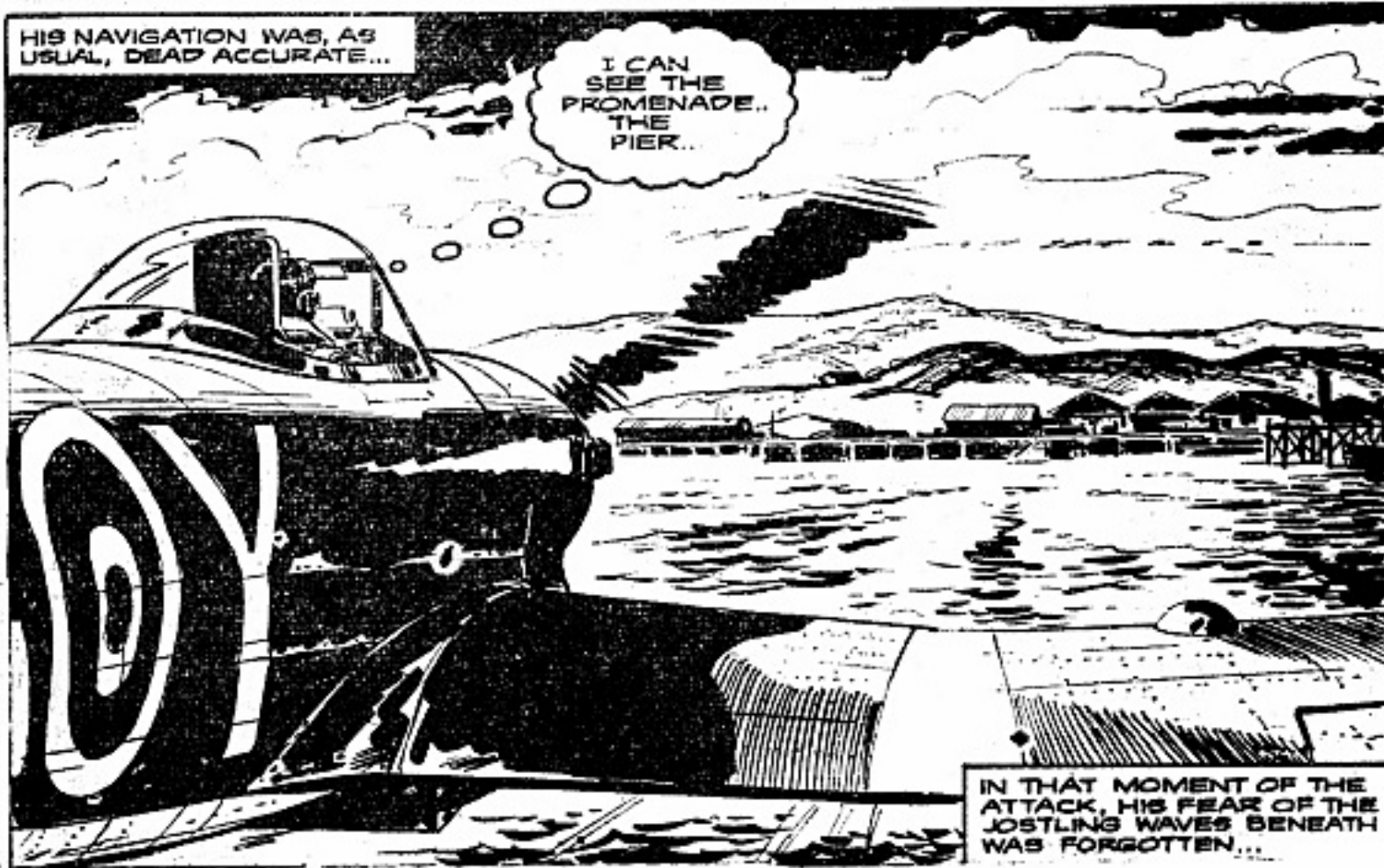
RIGID WITH CONCENTRATION, JOHNNIE MANAGED TO KEEP THEM ALL AT THE LOW LEVEL HE DEMANDED OF HIMSELF, HIS MIND SEARCHING FOR THE REASON OF AN ATTACK ON SUCH AN UNUSUAL TARGET.

I GUESS SOMEBODY WANTS TO FIND OUT IF WE REALLY CAN FIRE ROCKETS AT WATER LEVEL.



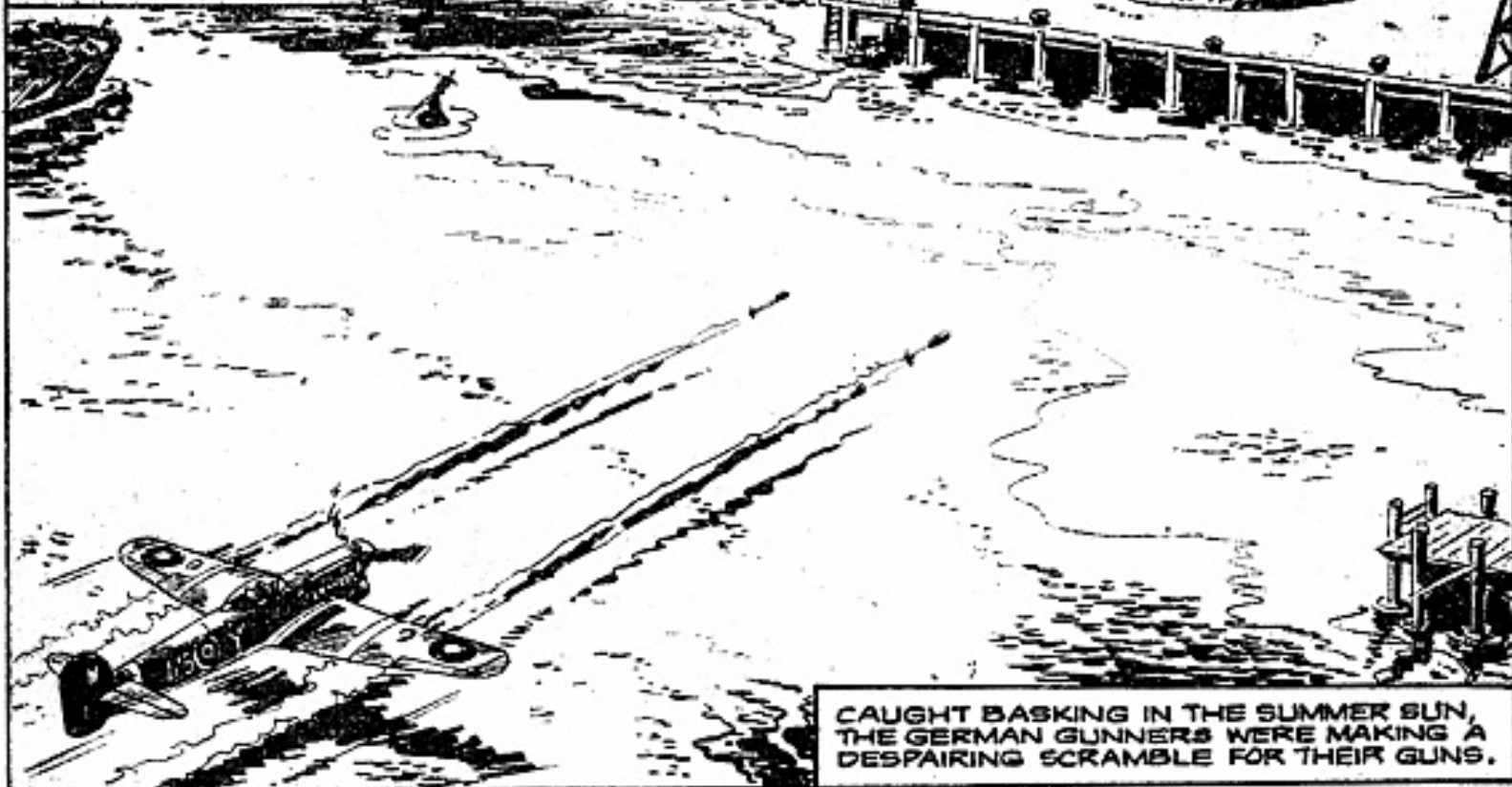
HIS NAVIGATION WAS, AS USUAL, DEAD ACCURATE...

I CAN SEE THE PROMENADE... THE PIER...



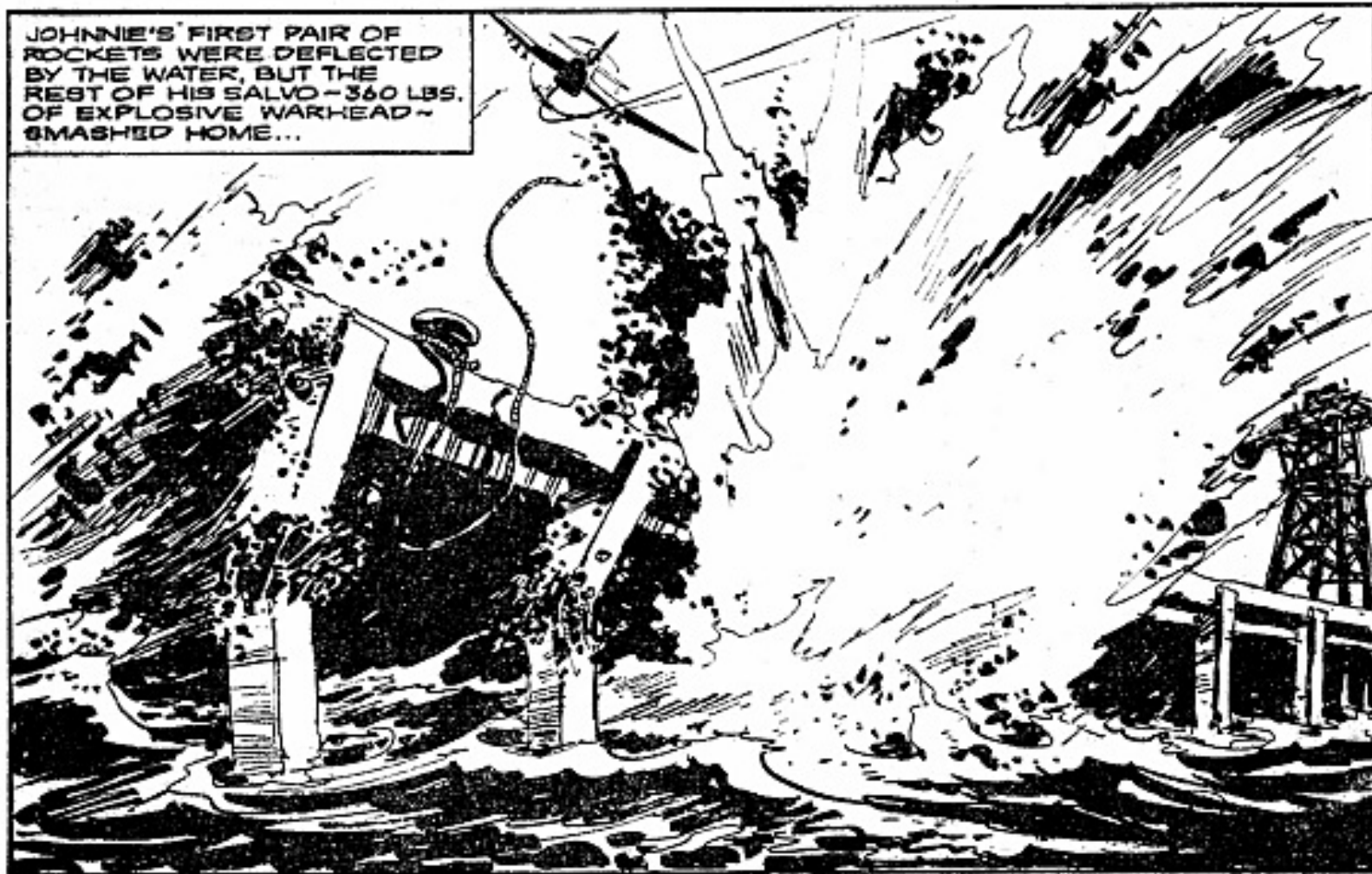
IN THAT MOMENT OF THE ATTACK, HIS FEAR OF THE JOSTLING WAVES BENEATH WAS FORGOTTEN...

AT ABSOLUTE WATER-LEVEL, HE AIMED HIS TYPHOON AT THE TARGET~ AND LET FLY HIS ROCKETS...



CAUGHT BASKING IN THE SUMMER SUN, THE GERMAN GUNNERS WERE MAKING A DESPAIRING SCRAMBLE FOR THEIR GUNS.

JOHNNIE'S FIRST PAIR OF ROCKETS WERE DEFLECTED BY THE WATER, BUT THE REST OF HIS SALVO~360 LBS. OF EXPLOSIVE WARHEAD~ SMASHED HOME...





HARD BEHIND THEIR LEADER  
CAME MORE TYPHOONS,  
MORE FLARING ROCKETS TO  
SPLINTER THE PIER'S  
TIMBERS LIKE MATCH-STICKS.

THE  
PIER'S  
COLLAPSING!

JOHNNIE LOST ALL ANXIETY IN THE  
HEARTENING SUCCESS OF THIS ATTACK.  
HE CAUGHT SIGHT OF WESLEY GOODMAN'S  
TYPHOON, HUGGING THE WATER AND  
ABOUT TO DELIVER THE KNOCK-OUT...

GOOD  
BOY,  
WES!

NEXT SECOND, JOHNNIE'S HEART TURNED OVER AS HE SAW GOODMAN'S WING-TIP CLIP THE WATER...



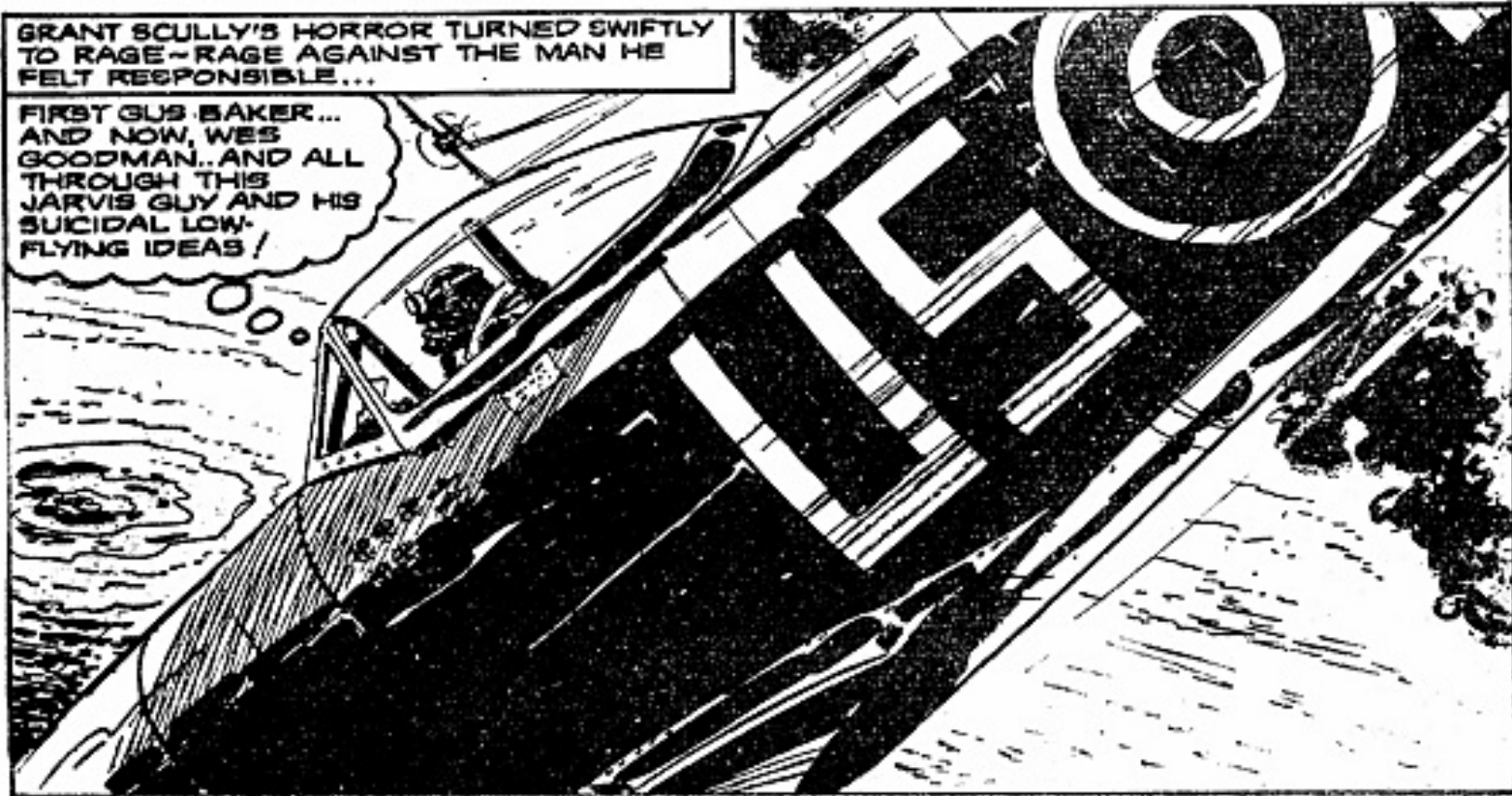
WITH ANGUISHED EYES, JOHNNIE SAW THE SWIFT DEATH PLUNGE...



AND AGAIN HE WAS FEELING THE TERROR OF HIS OWN ENTOMBMENT IN A COCKPIT...

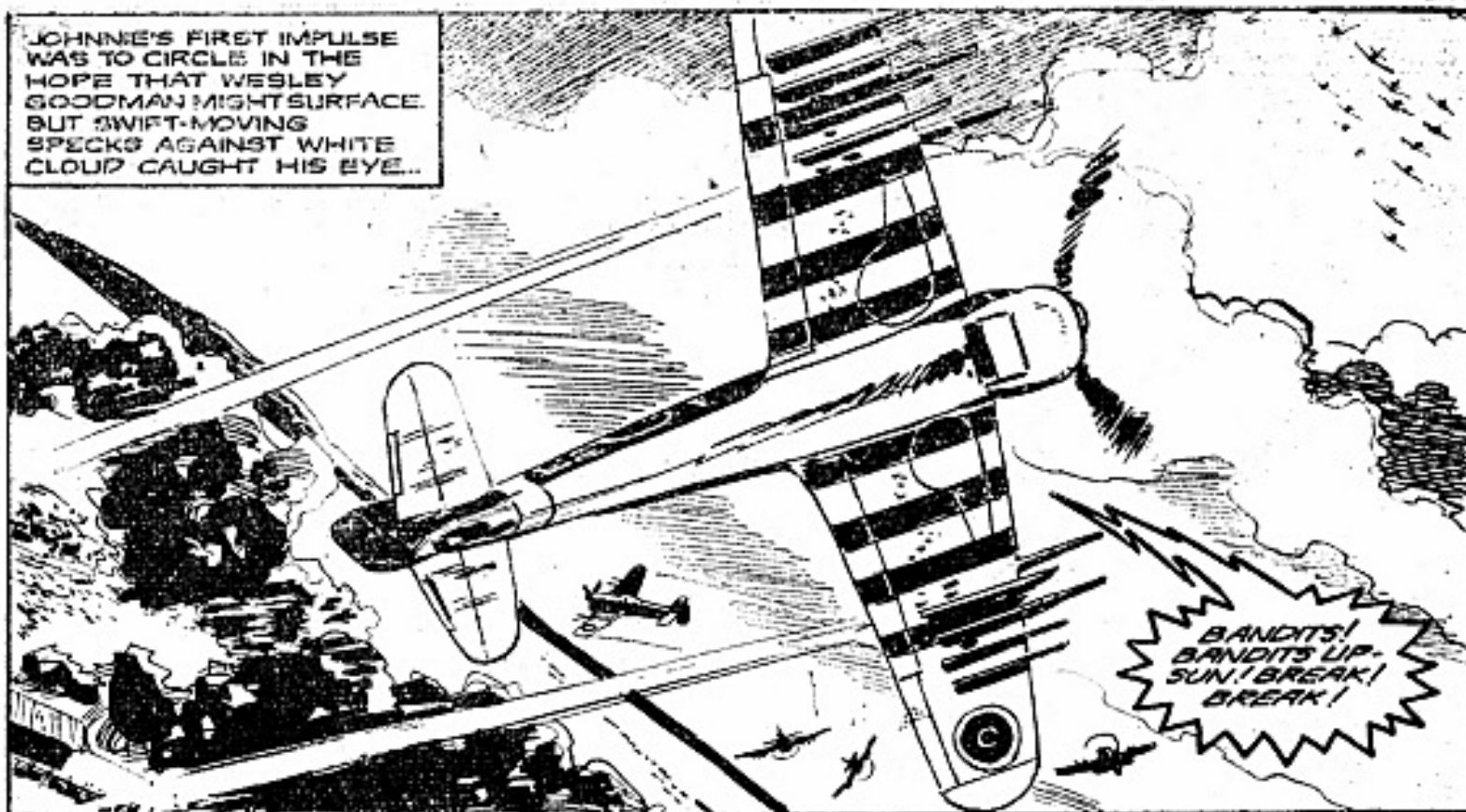
GRANT SCULLY'S HORROR TURNED SWIFTLY TO RAGE—RAGE AGAINST THE MAN HE FELT RESPONSIBLE...

FIRST GUS BAKER...  
AND NOW, WES  
GOODMAN...AND ALL  
THROUGH THIS  
JARVIS GUY AND HIS  
SUICIDAL LOW-  
FLYING IDEAS!

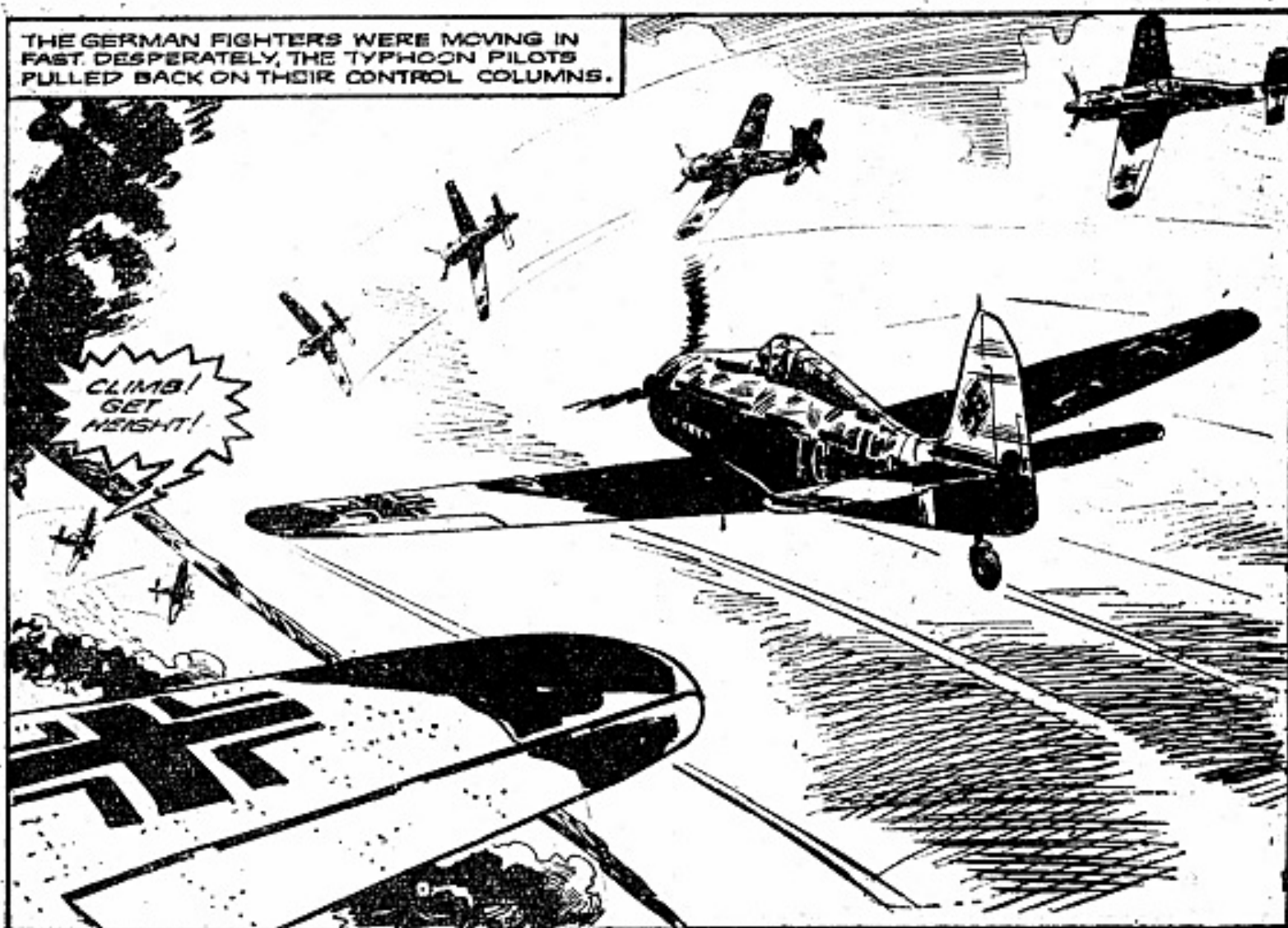




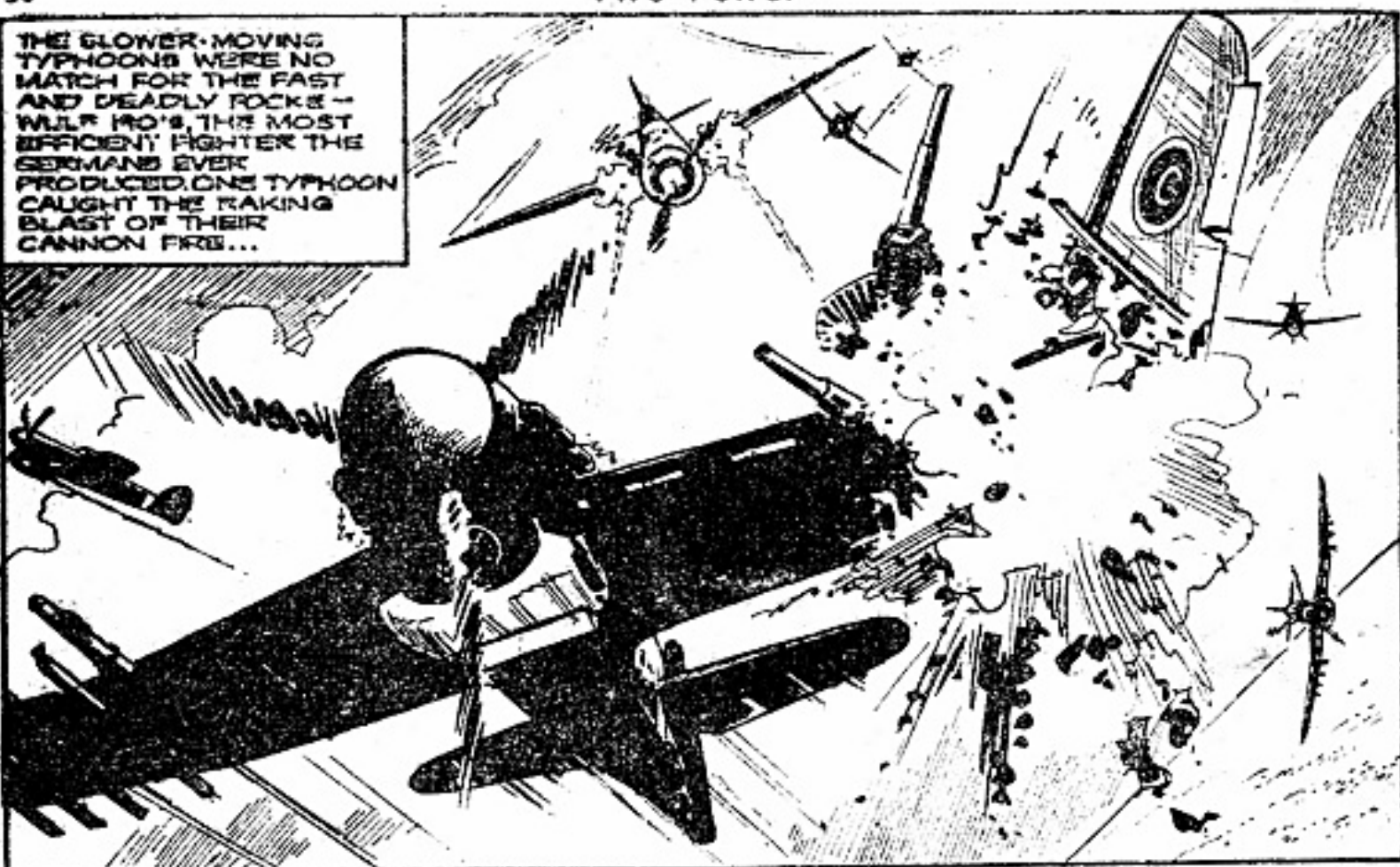
JOHNNIE'S FIRST IMPULSE WAS TO CIRCLE IN THE HOPE THAT WESLEY GOODMAN MIGHT SURFACE. BUT SWIFT-MOVING SPECKS AGAINST WHITE CLOUD CAUGHT HIS EYE...



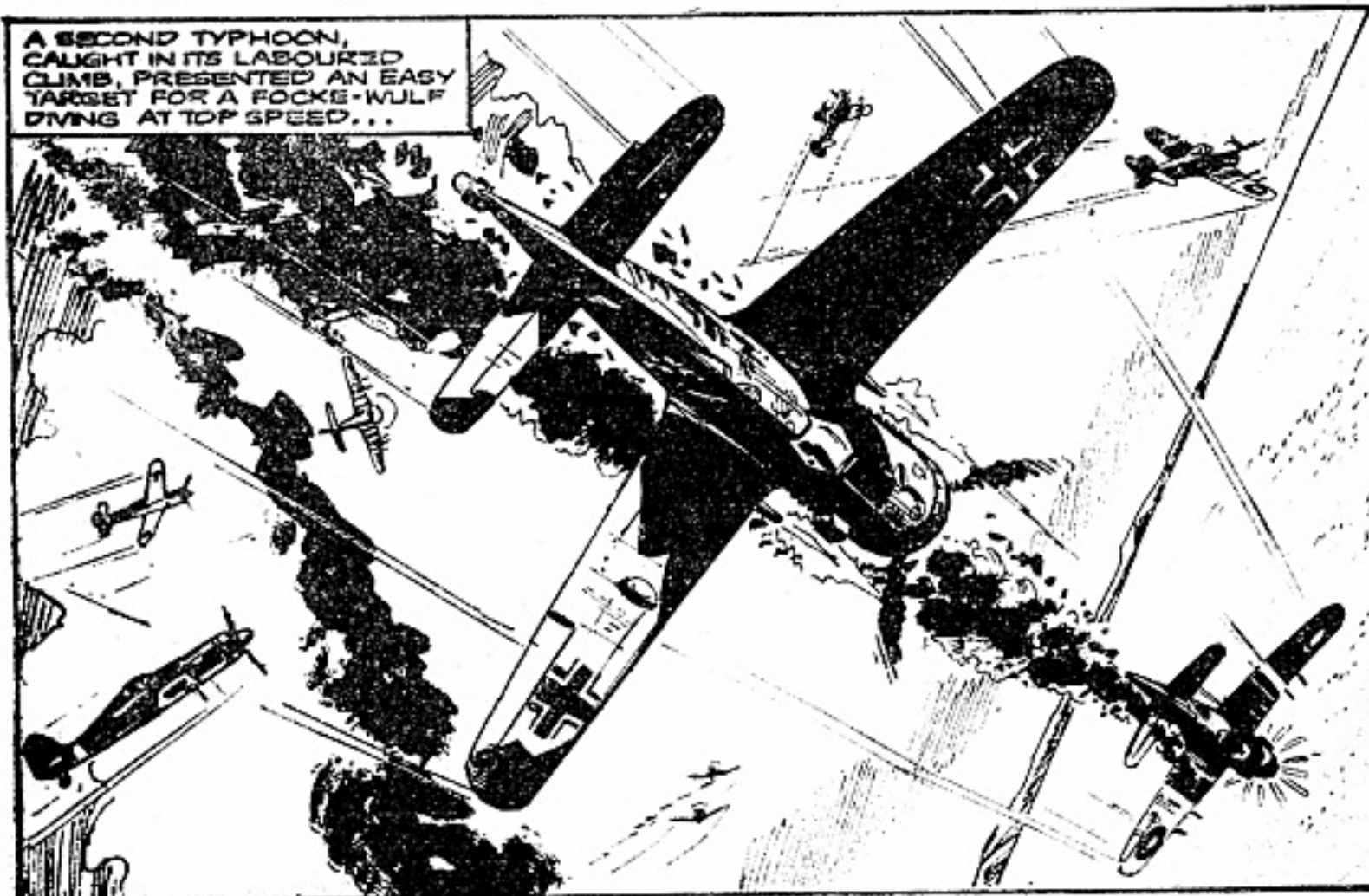
THE GERMAN FIGHTERS WERE MOVING IN FAST. DESPERATELY, THE TYPHOON PILOTS PULLED BACK ON THEIR CONTROL COLUMNS.



THE SLOWER-MOVING  
TYPHOONS WERE NO  
MATCH FOR THE FAST  
AND DEADLY ROCKS -  
WULF RO'S, THE MOST  
EFFICIENT FIGHTER THE  
GERMANS EVER  
PRODUCED. ONE TYPHOON  
CAUGHT THE RAGING  
BLAST OF THEIR  
CANNON FIRE...



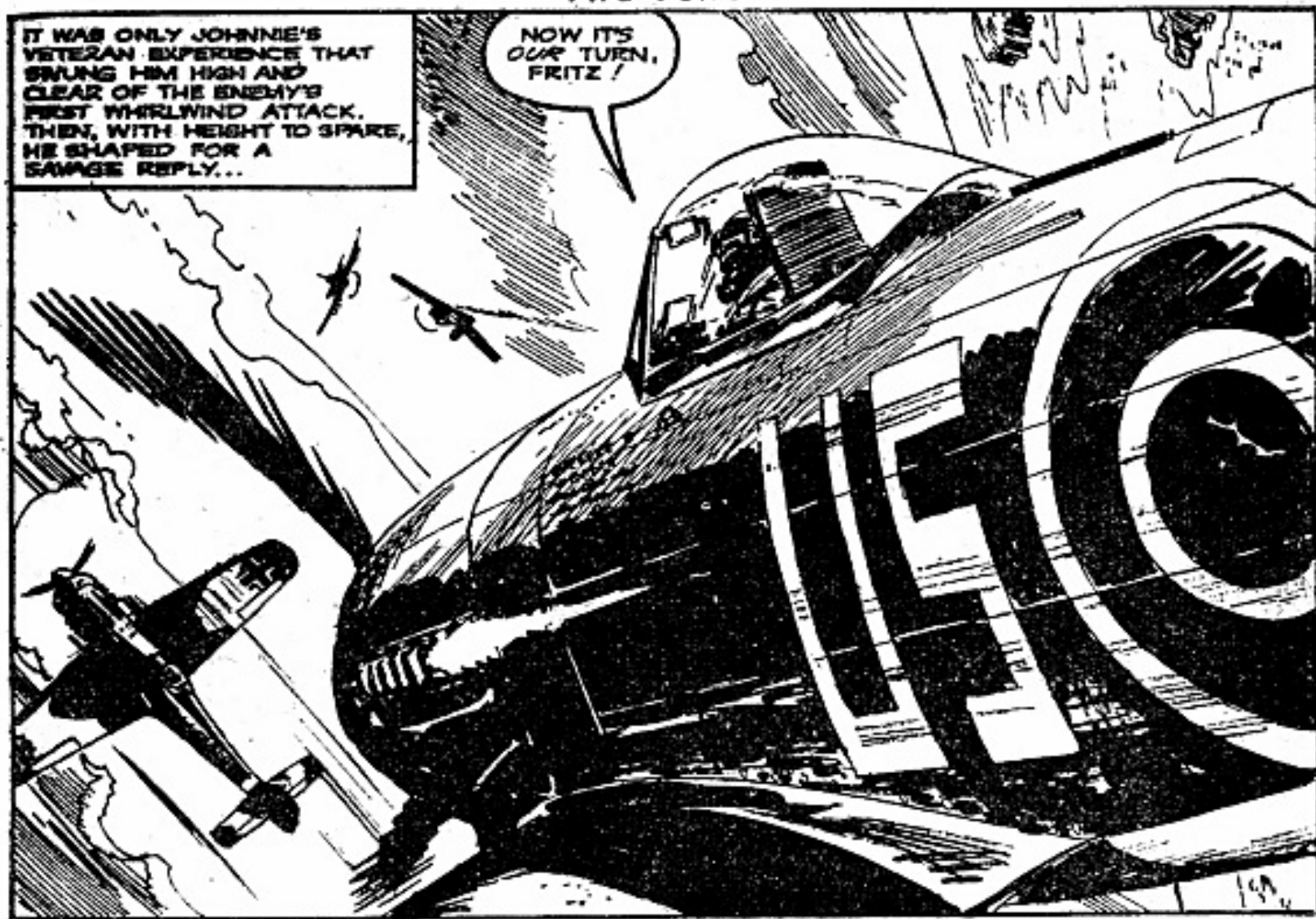
A SECOND TYPHOON,  
CAUGHT IN ITS LABOURED  
CLIMB, PRESENTED AN EASY  
TARGET FOR A FOCKE-WULF  
DIVING AT TOP SPEED...



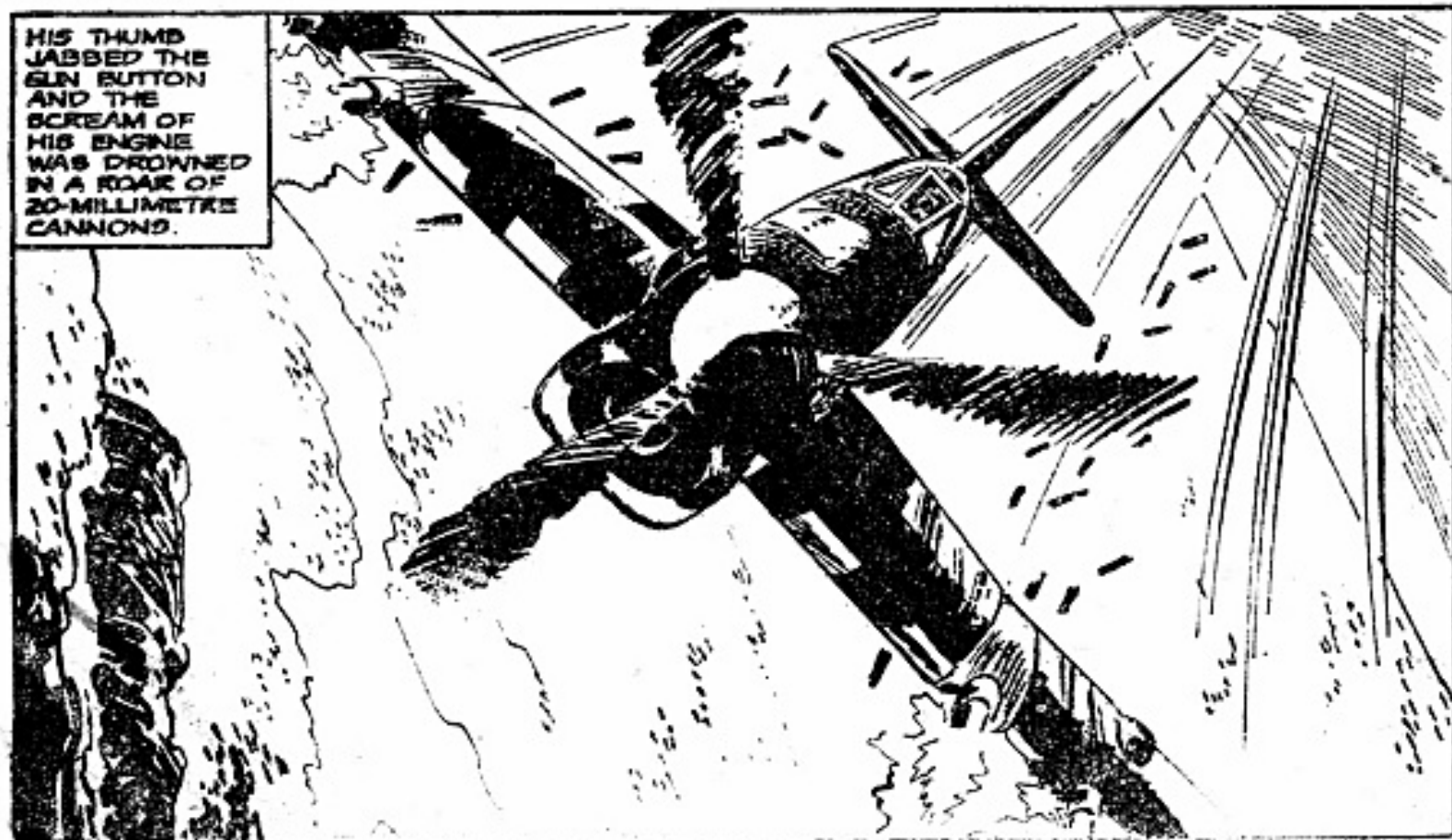


IT WAS ONLY JOHNNIE'S VETERAN EXPERIENCE THAT SWUNG HIM HIGH AND CLEAR OF THE ENEMY'S FIRST WHIRLWIND ATTACK. THEN, WITH HEIGHT TO SPARE, HE SHAPED FOR A SAVAGE REPLY...

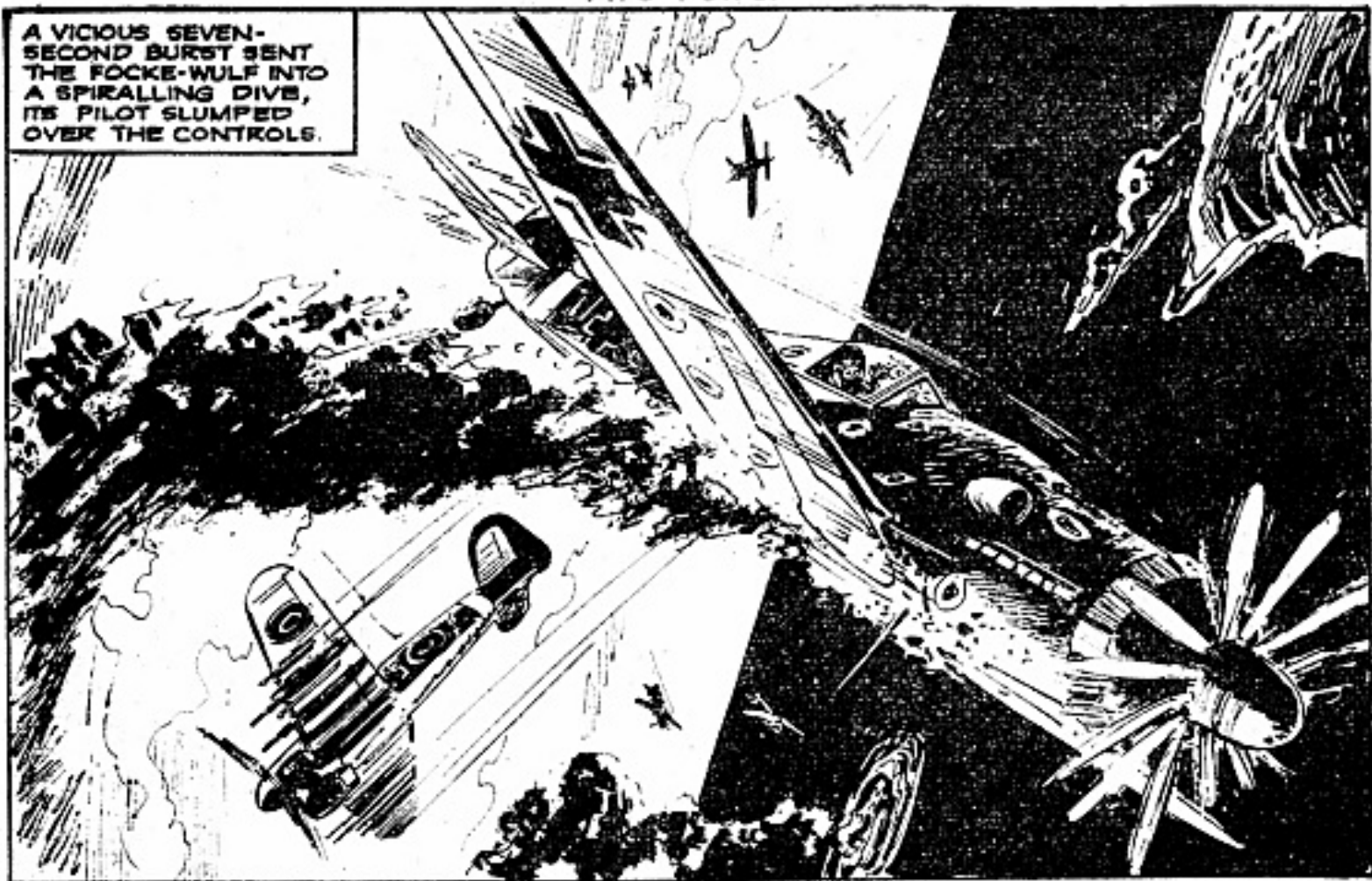
NOW IT'S OUR TURN, FRITZ!



HIS THUMB JABBED THE GUN BUTTON AND THE SCREAM OF HIS ENGINE WAS DROWNED IN A ROAR OF 20-MILLIMETRE CANNONS.



A VICIOUS SEVEN-SECOND BURST SENT THE FOCKE-WULF INTO A SPIRALLING DIVE, ITS PILOT SLUMPED OVER THE CONTROLS.



SUDDENLY, THE SKY WAS CLEAR OF ENEMY PLANES. CALLING THE TYPHOONS INTO FORMATION, JOHNNIE JARVIS LED HIS BATTERED MEN HOME. HIS OWN HEART WAS HEAVY...

WES GOODMAN - THE ONLY ONE I COULD CALL A FRIEND - AND NOW HE'S GONE...





THE MOMENT JOHNNIE CLIMBED OUT OF HIS COCKPIT, HE SENSED TROUBLE...

HEY, JARVIS!



GRANT SCULLY'S CALL HAD A HOSTILE RING ABOUT IT...

THE TOUGH TORONTO MAN CAME STRIDING OVER JOHNNIE BRACED HIMSELF...

GUS BAKER, AND NOW WES GOODMAN, I SAID YOU'D KILL US ALL!

TAKE THAT BACK, SCULLY!



IT WAS BAD ENOUGH LOSING THE ONLY FRIEND HE HAD, BUT TO BE BLAMED FOR HIS TRAGIC DEATH WAS TOO MUCH. JOHNNIE'S TEMPER FLARED...

YOU KEEP YOUR MOUTH SHUT, BEFORE I...

...SHUT IT FOR ME? WHY DON'T YOU TRY IT? MURDERER!



SOMETHING SEEMED TO SNAP INSIDE JARVIS, AND STUNG BEYOND ENDURANCE, HE LASHED OUT...

UGH!



WHITE AND SHAKEN, JOHNNIE JARVIS STARED DOWN AT THE CRUMPLED FORM OF HIS TORMENTOR. THEN HE SWUNG ON HIS HEEL AND STRODE AWAY...



I MUST BE CRAZY!  
I'LL BE GLAD WHEN  
THIS SPECIAL TARGET  
BUSINESS IS OVER.  
THEN I'LL ASK  
FOR A TRANSFER.



STILL SHAKEN FROM HIS BRUSH WITH SCULLY, JOHNNIE JARVIS WAS JUST ABOUT TO DRIVE OFF IN HIS ANCIENT SPORTS CAR WHEN THE CHEERY VOICE OF THE INTELLIGENCE OFFICER HAILED HIM...

IT'S COME, SIR!

WHAT'S COME?

THE SPECIAL TARGET... AT LEAST, YOUR INSTRUCTIONS FOR IT.



JOHNNIE CUT HIS ENGINES AND JUMPED OUT TO QUESTION THE I.O. FURTHER...

THE SQUADRON IS TO FIT LONG RANGE TANKS AND FLY TO TREPANNORTH IN CORNWALL.

WHEN?

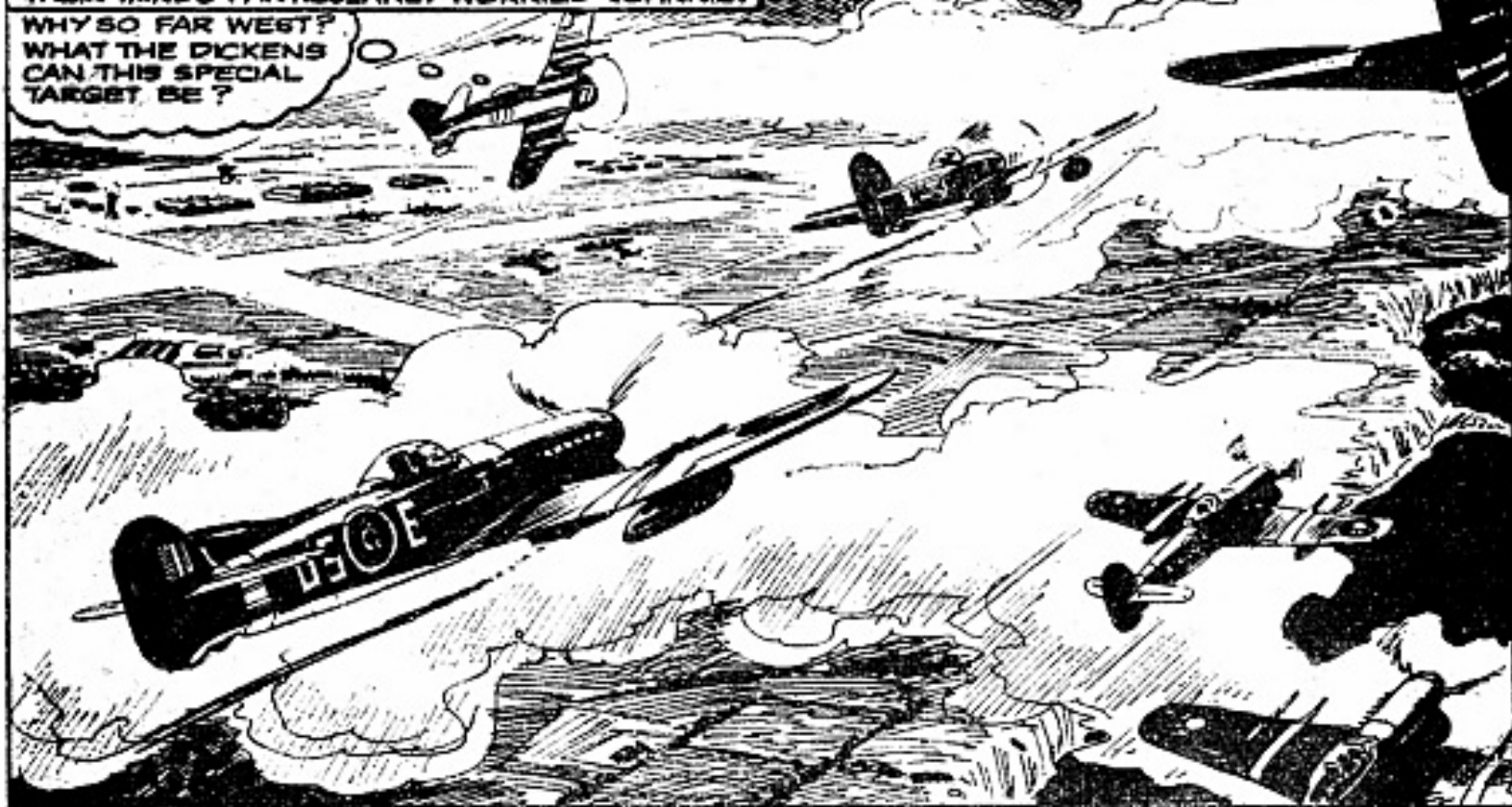
TONIGHT, SIR!



# Chapter 4. LONG HAUL

THAT AFTERNOON SAW FEVERISH PREPARATION. BY EVENING, JOHNNIE JARVIS WAS LEADING HIS SQUADRON OVER THE WILD CORNISH LANDSCAPE. THE QUESTION THAT NAGGED AT THEIR MINDS PARTICULARLY WORRIED JOHNNIE.

WHY SO FAR WEST?  
WHAT THE DICKENS  
CAN THIS SPECIAL  
TARGET BE?



THERE WAS NO MISTAKING THE STRAINED, FORMAL ATMOSPHERE WHICH SEEMED TO HANG OVER R.A.F. STATION, TREFANNORTH. JOHNNIE WAS TOLD TO PARADE HIS MEN... AND SOON HE KNEW THE REASON WHY...

GREAT SCOTT! AN AIR VICE-MARSHAL! THIS MUST BE SOMETHING REALLY SPECIAL!



THE CANADIANS EYED THE IMPRESSIVE APPROACH OF AIR VICE-MARSHAL SIR BARTLETT THOMPSON WITH GROWING CONCERN.



AFTER A TERSE GREETING, THE BIG MAN WENT AHEAD TO THE BRIEFING ROOM WHERE PRESENTLY HE ANNOUNCED HIMSELF READY...

THE A.O.C. WILL BRIEF YOU HIMSELF.



THE MEN'S STARTLED EYES FOCUSED ON A DETAILED PLASTER MODEL OF A SHIPPING HARBOUR-BUT WITH AN OMINOUS DIFFERENCE.

THE U-BOAT PEN BASED ON THE ILE DE NEZ, OFF THE WEST COAST OF FRANCE-YOUR TARGET FOR TOMORROW, GENTLEMEN!



WITH BATED BREATH, THEY FOLLOWED SIR BARTLETT'S EXPLANATORY FINGER, POINTING FIRST TO THE HARBOUR ENTRANCE, THEN TO THE PAIR OF LOCK GATES...

..AND THIS IS THE U-BOAT PEN ITSELF, A MASSIVE BLOCK OF CONCRETE

IN SOMBRE TONES THE AIR VICE-MARSHAL WENT ON TO EXPLAIN THAT NO AMOUNT OF BOMBS, EVEN OF THE BLOCK-BUSTER TYPE, HAD MADE ANY IMPRESSION ON THIS IMMENSELY STRONG SUBMARINE BASE...

BUT WE ARE OF THE OPINION THAT A ROCKET ATTACK MIGHT DO THE TRICK.

IGNORING THE GASP THAT WENT ROUND, THE OLDER MAN GLANCED SHARPLY AT JOHNNIE JARVIS' SET FACE...

FORGET THE BASE ITSELF, SQUADRON LEADER, JUST DESTROY THE U-BOATS INSIDE IT—BY AIMING YOUR ROCKETS RIGHT INTO THE ENTRANCE...

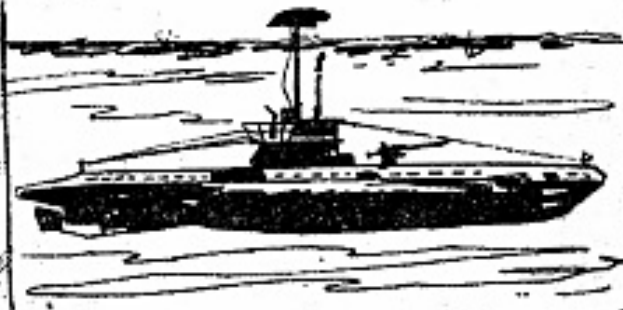
YOU... YOU MEAN A WATER-LEVEL APPROACH, SIR. BUT...

SUDDENLY JOHNNIE'S MIND FLASHED BACK TO HIS OWN UNDERWATER ORDEAL...



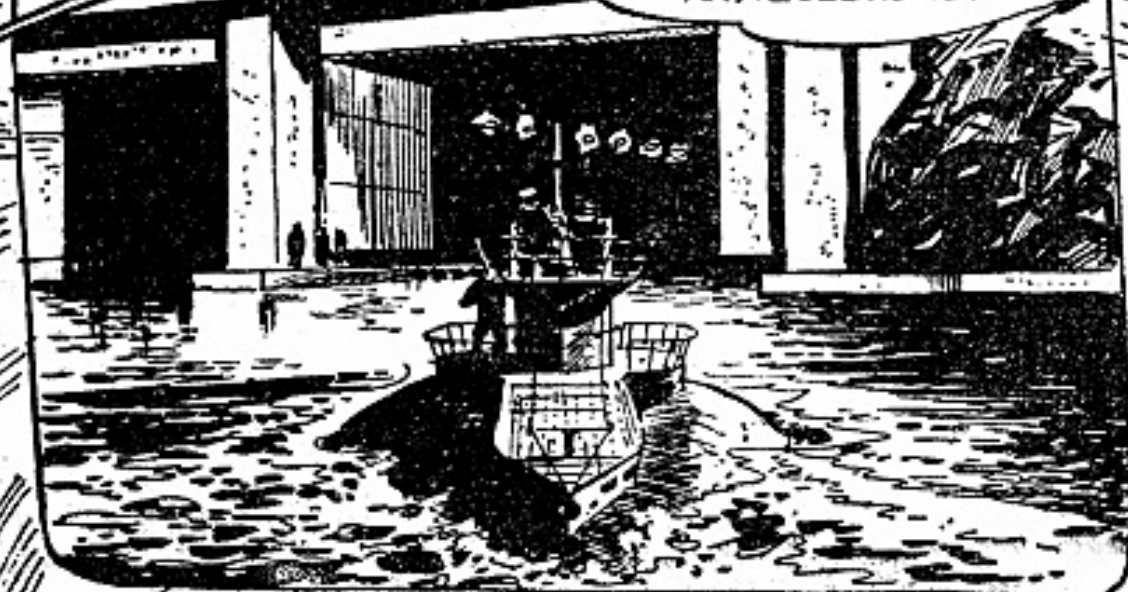
SIR BARTLETT HAD THE ROOM DARKENED AND CALLED FOR A PROJECTED PICTURE OF A U-BOAT FITTED WITH THE NEWEST GERMAN INVENTION—THE SCHNORKEL BREATHING DEVICE...

WITH THIS SPECIAL DEVICE, THESE U-BOATS AT ILE DE NEZ CAN SLIP THROUGH INTO THE CHANNEL AND BECOME A SERIOUS MENACE TO OUR INVASION SHIPPING. THEY MUST BE DESTROYED!



THE PICTURE GAVE PLACE TO ANOTHER—THE CAVERN-LIKE ENTRANCE TO THE U-BOAT PEN AT ILE DE NEZ, SIR BARTLETT'S DRY TONES WENT ON...

THANKS TO THOSE LOCK-GATES YOU SAW IN THE MODEL, THE GERMANS CAN MAINTAIN A WATER-LEVEL WHICH KEEPS THEIR U-BOATS ALMOST OUT OF SIGHT. SO FIRST, YOU'LL HAVE TO BREACH THE LOCK-GATES! ANY QUESTIONS?



THE BRIEFING CONCLUDED, JOHNNIE JARVIS BRACED HIMSELF TO GIVE HIS INSTRUCTIONS IN THE METHOD OF ATTACK...

WE'LL SPLIT INTO TWO FLIGHTS—THE FIRST WILL BREACH THE LOCK-GATES, THE SECOND WILL FOLLOW UP AND BLITZ THE U-BOATS!



IT WAS PLAIN HIS MEN THOUGHT THE WHOLE THING A SUICIDE MISSION, BUT NOBODY QUESTIONED JOHNNIE'S PLAN OF ATTACK.

IF YOU HAVE TO BALE OUT, THERE'LL BE A LINE OF BRITISH SUBMARINES ON THE ROUTE BACK TO PICK YOU UP.



AFTER JOHNNIE HAD OUTLINED HIS PLAN, IT WAS SCULLY WHO POSED THE BIG QUESTION...

BUSTING THE LOCK-GATES WILL BE A PIECE OF CAKE COMPARED TO THE SUB PEN ITSELF. WHO'S DOING WHICH?

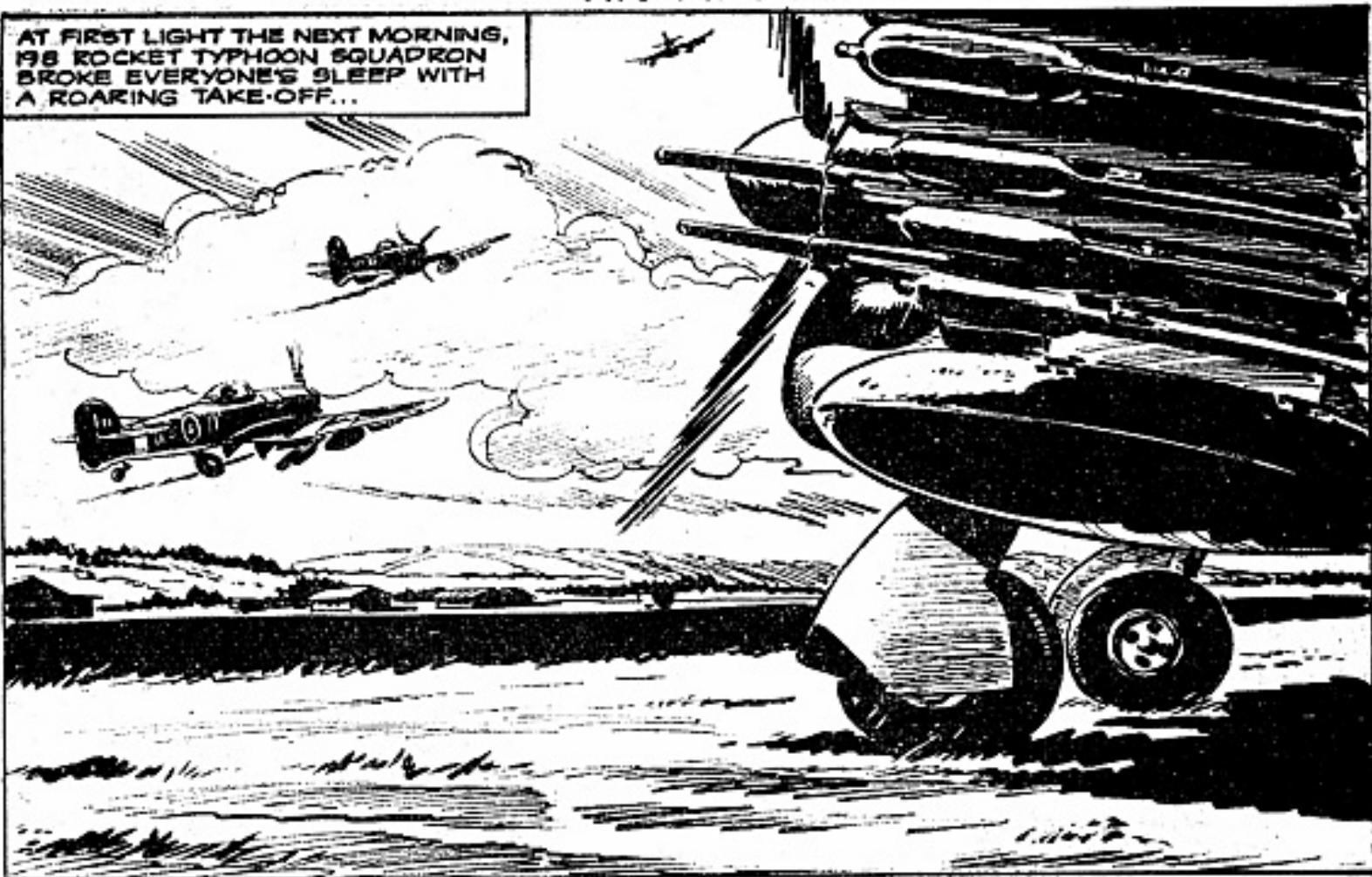
YOUR FLIGHT CAN TAKE THE GATES, SCULLY... YOU CAN LEAVE THE U-BOATS TO MY FLIGHT. SATISFIED?



JOHNNIE KNEW THE SECOND ATTACK WAVE WOULD BE THE MORE DANGEROUS. HIS FEAR OF DROWNING SURGED UP ANEW AND HE KNEW HE MUST DESTROY IT FOR ALL TIME...



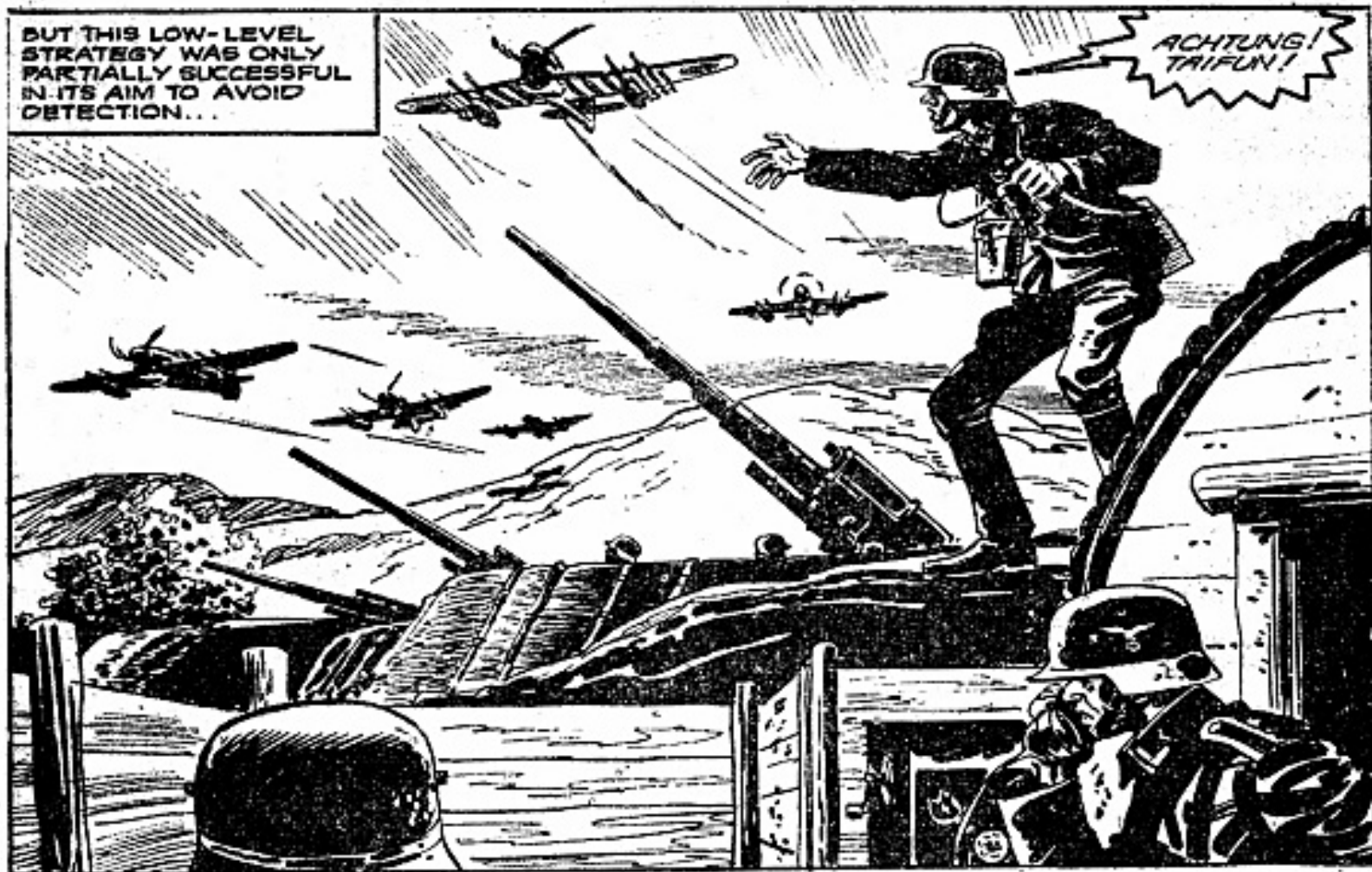
AT FIRST LIGHT THE NEXT MORNING, 198 ROCKET TYPHOON SQUADRON BROKE EVERYONE'S SLEEP WITH A ROARING TAKE-OFF...



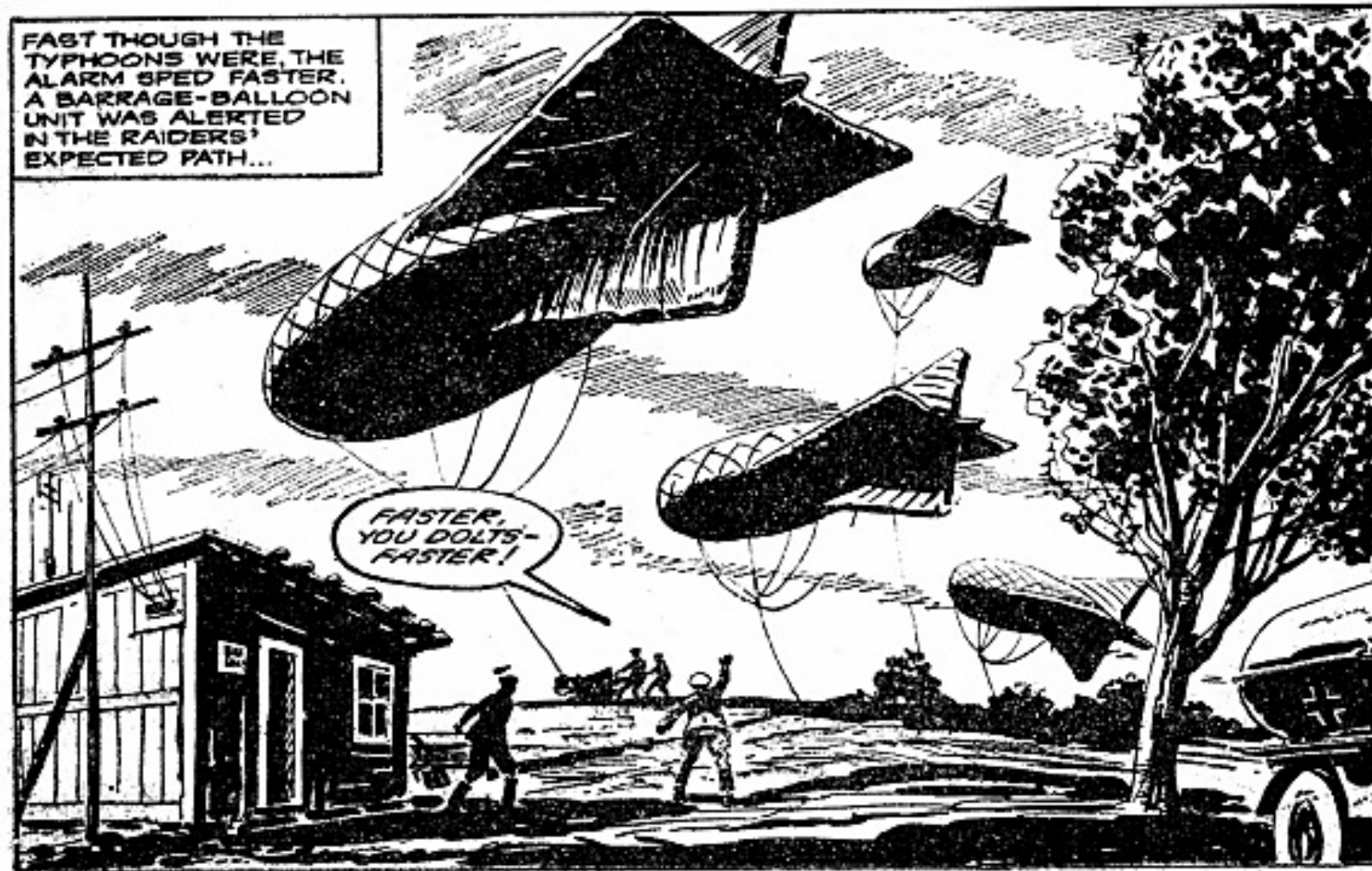
TO SAVE FUEL, JOHNNIE PLOTTED THEIR COURSE ACROSS THE BRETON PENINSULA. AT ZERO FEET, THEY WHIPPED THE TREE-TOPS WITH THEIR SLIPSTREAM...



BUT THIS LOW-LEVEL STRATEGY WAS ONLY PARTIALLY SUCCESSFUL IN ITS AIM TO AVOID DETECTION...



FAST THOUGH THE TYPHOONS WERE, THE ALARM SPED FASTER. A BARRAGE-BALLOON UNIT WAS ALERTED IN THE RAIDERS' EXPECTED PATH...





JOHNNIE SPOTTED THE LURKING TRAP IN THE NICK OF TIME AND PULLED EVERYONE AFTER HIM IN A ZOOMING CLIMB - ONLY TO MEET A VICIOUS GUN BARRAGE THAT WAS WAITING FOR THEM...

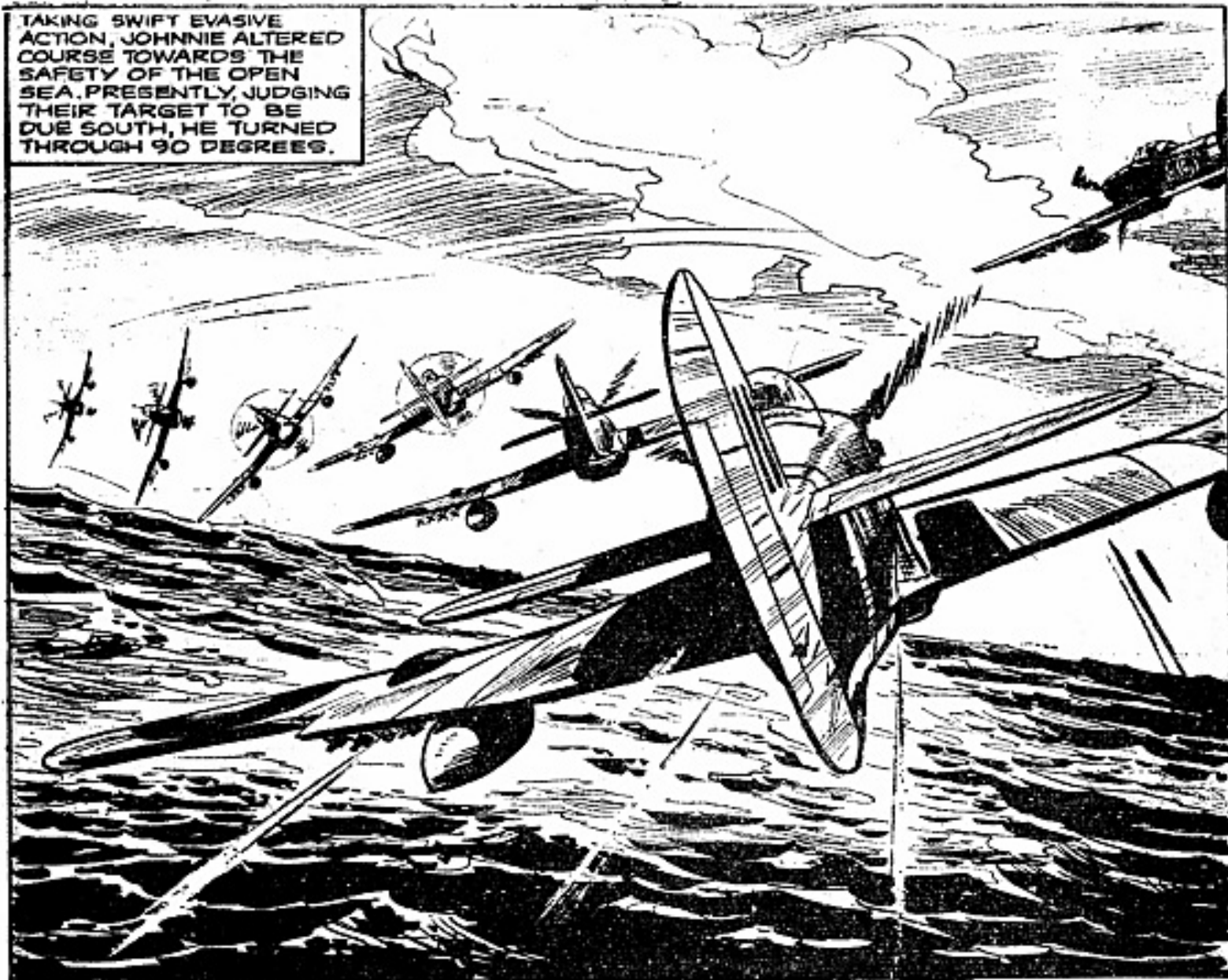
BREAK!

HOLY MACKEREL!

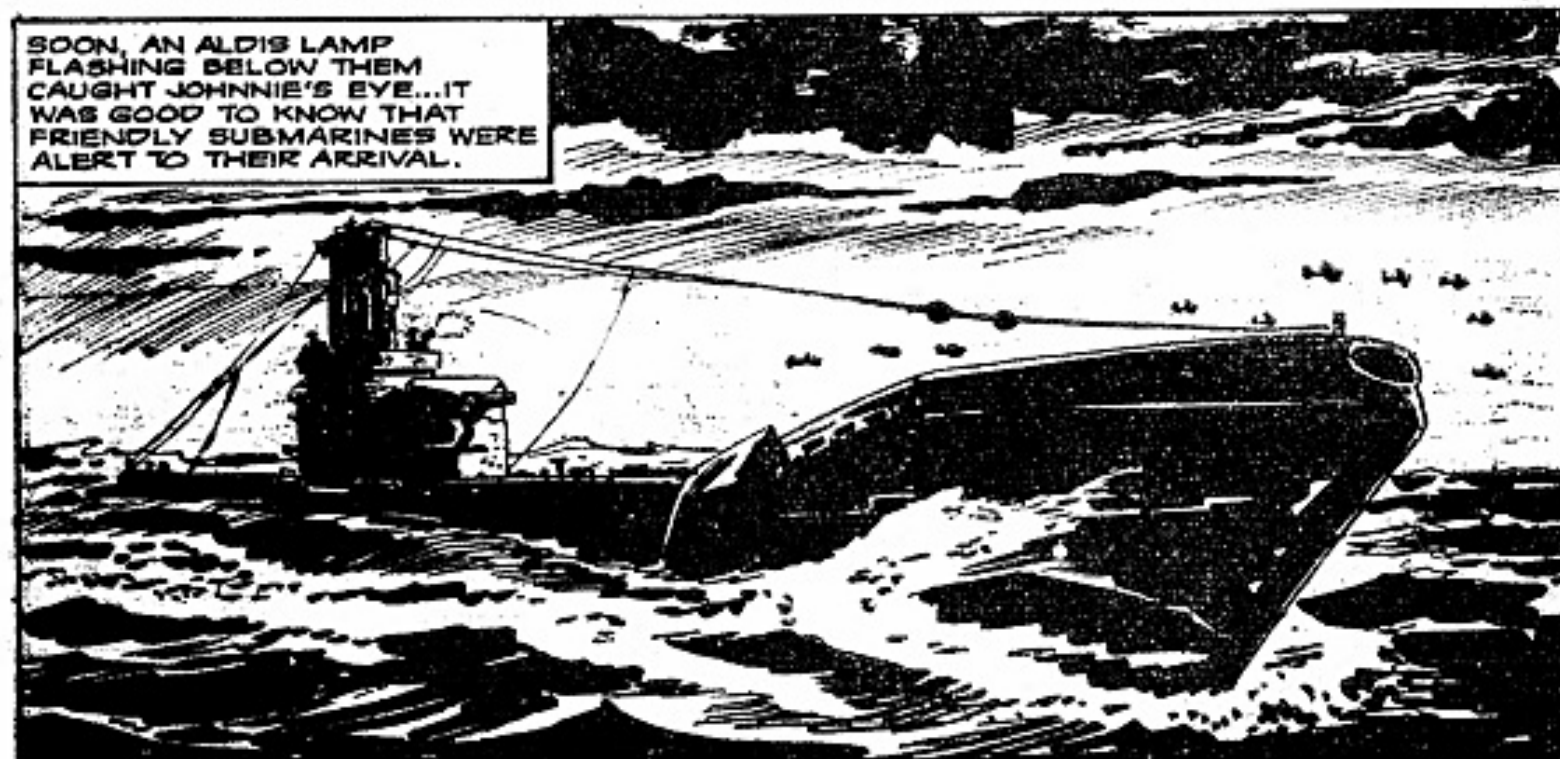
BUCK CALDWELL, THE EX-POLICEMAN FROM EDMONTON, WAS MORTALLY HIT...

FLY ON!

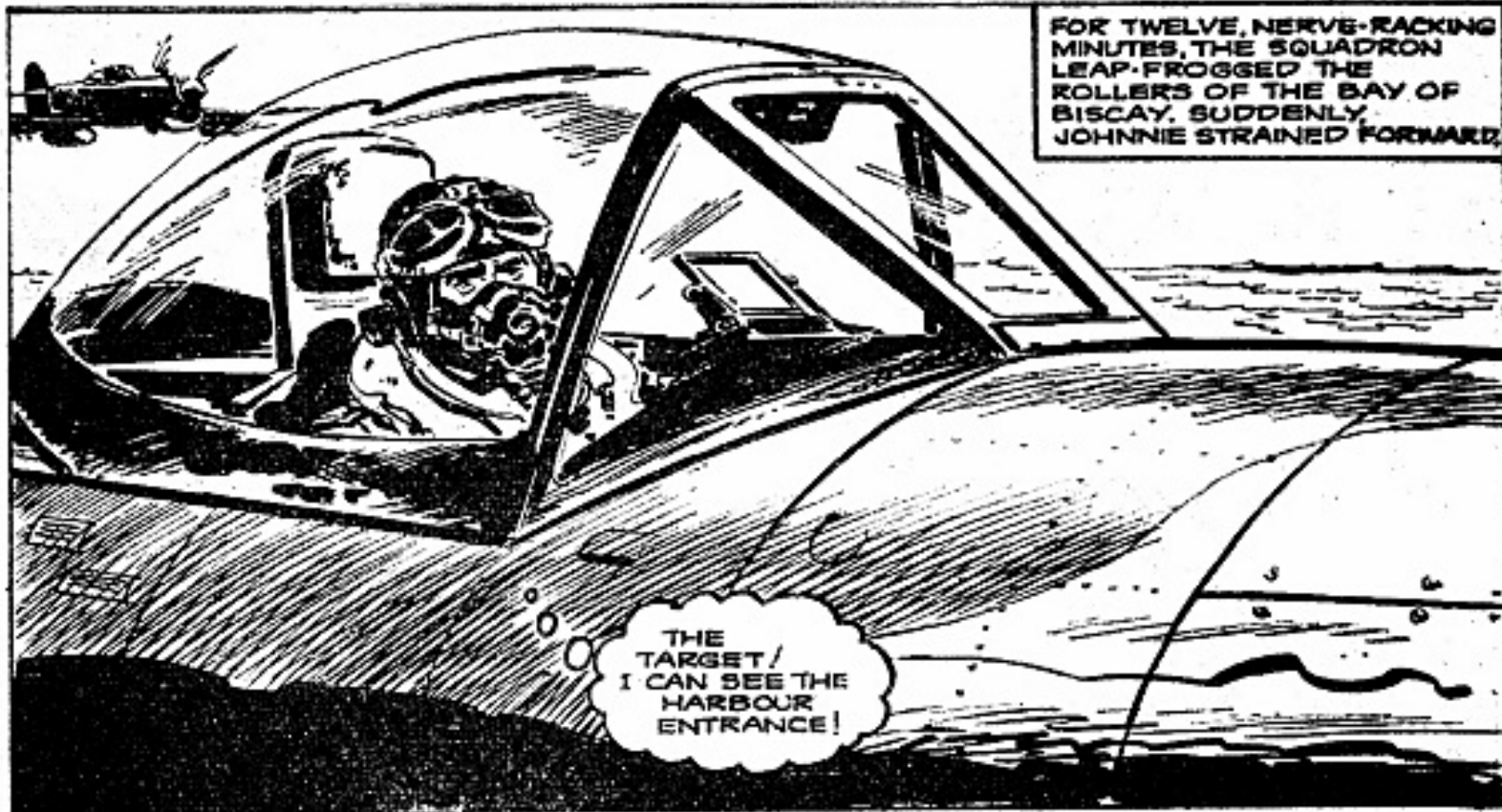
TAKING SWIFT EVASIVE ACTION, JOHNNIE ALTERED COURSE TOWARDS THE SAFETY OF THE OPEN SEA. PRESENTLY, JUDGING THEIR TARGET TO BE DUE SOUTH, HE TURNED THROUGH 90 DEGREES.



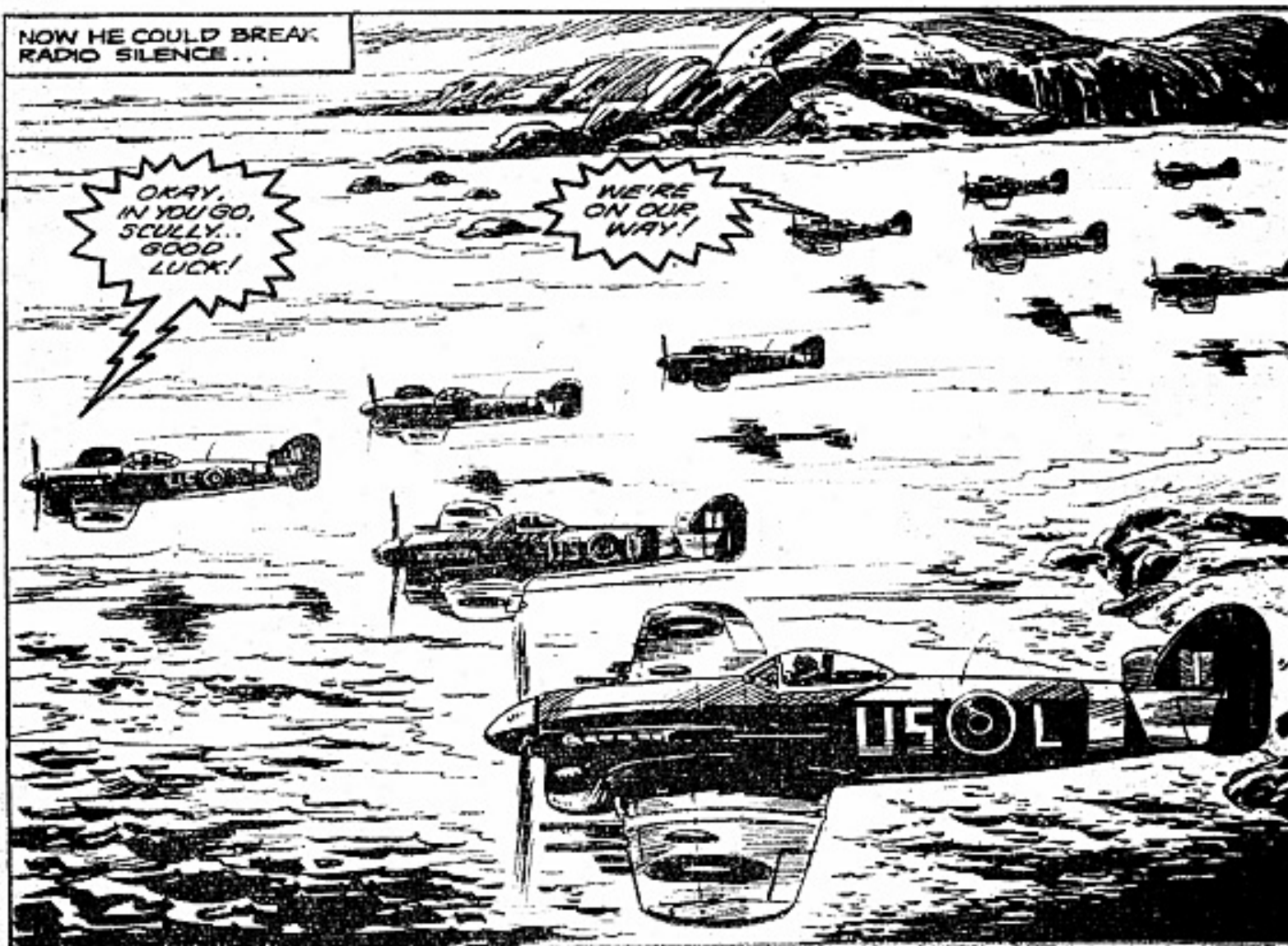
SOON, AN ALDIS LAMP FLASHING BELOW THEM CAUGHT JOHNNIE'S EYE...IT WAS GOOD TO KNOW THAT FRIENDLY SUBMARINES WERE ALERT TO THEIR ARRIVAL.







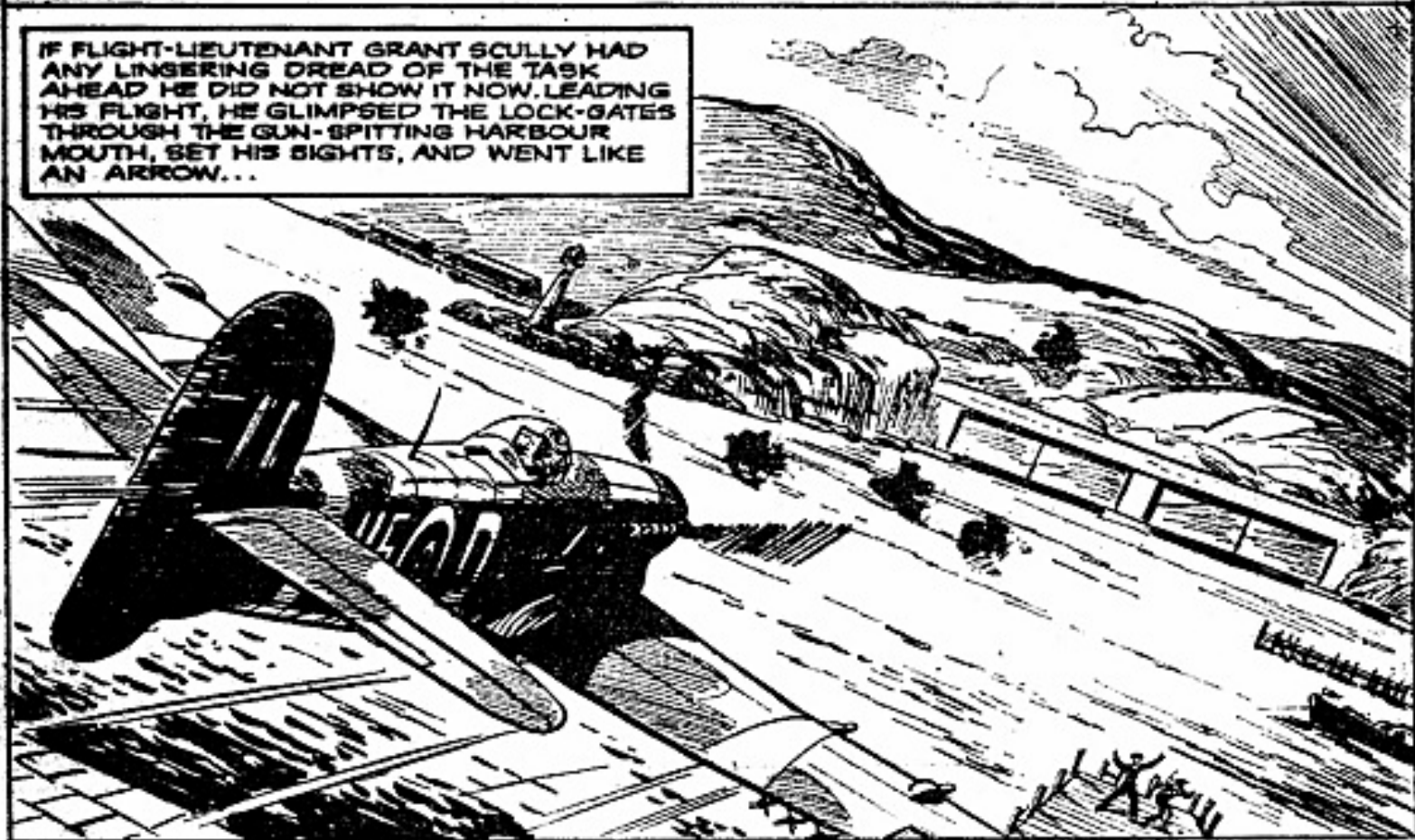
NOW HE COULD BREAK RADIO SILENCE...



## Chapter 5.

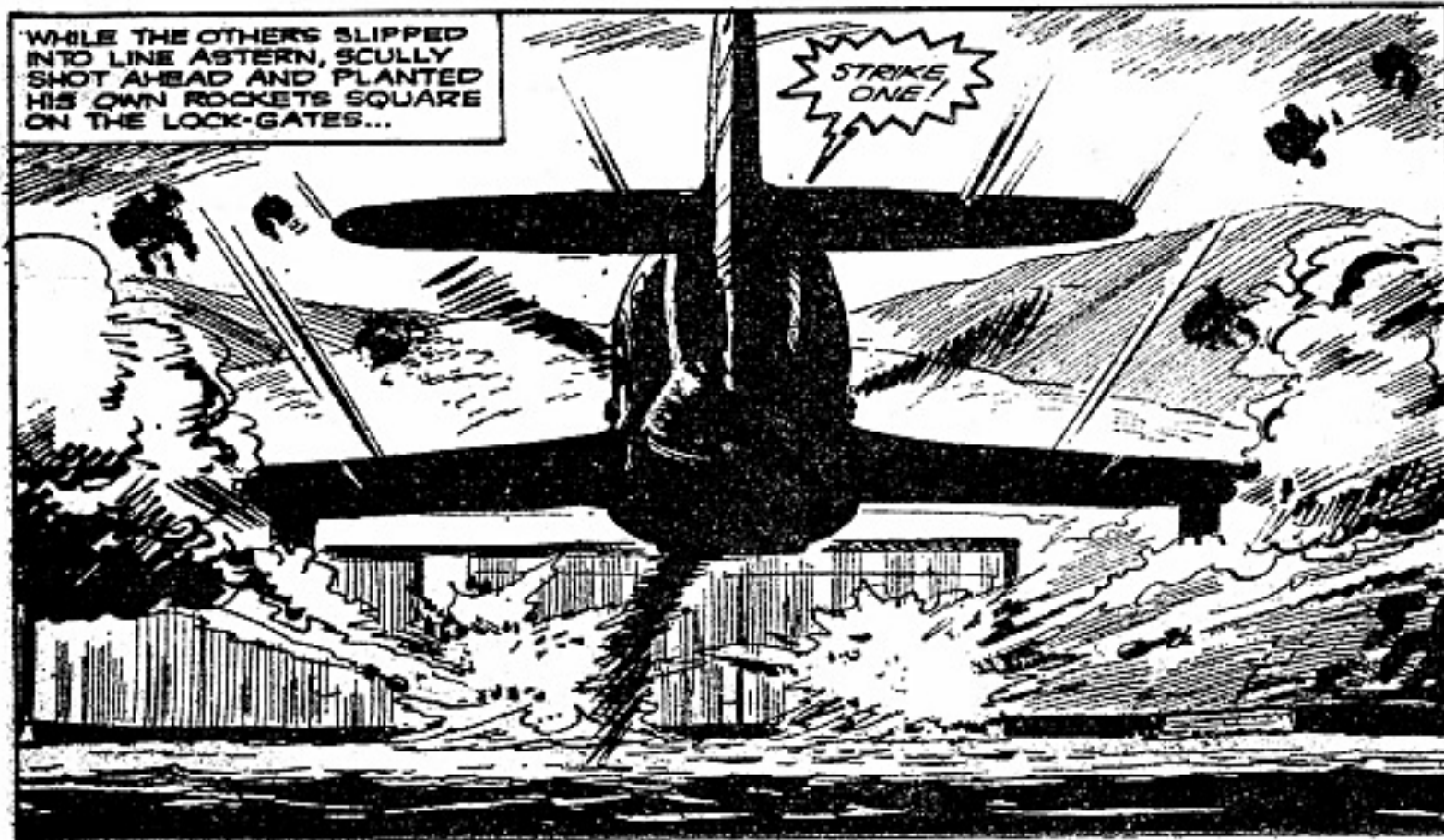
## FINEST HOUR

IF FLIGHT-LIEUTENANT GRANT SCULLY HAD ANY LINGERING DREAD OF THE TASK AHEAD HE DID NOT SHOW IT NOW. LEADING HIS FLIGHT, HE GLIMPSED THE LOCK-GATES THROUGH THE GUN-SPITTING HARBOUR MOUTH, SET HIS SIGHTS, AND WENT LIKE AN ARROW...



WHILE THE OTHERS SLIPPED INTO LINE ASTERN, SCULLY SHOT AHEAD AND PLANTED HIS OWN ROCKETS SQUARE ON THE LOCK-GATES...

STRIKE ONE!





BUT THE GATES, GIANT-TIMBERED AND IRON-BOUND, WERE A TOUGHER PROPOSITION THAN EXPECTED. THEY DID NOT YIELD TO THE FIRST ATTACK. SCULLY'S SALVO ONLY PUNCHED GREAT HOLES IN THEM.



SCULLY HAD RUN THE GAUNTLET UNSCATHED, BUT THE NEXT IN LINE WAS CAUGHT IN A STINGING CROSSFIRE...



THE STRICKEN TYPHOON  
SUDDENLY BLEW UP,  
FORCING THE OTHERS  
BEHIND TO BREAK  
FORMATION...

WATCH  
OUT!

BREAK!

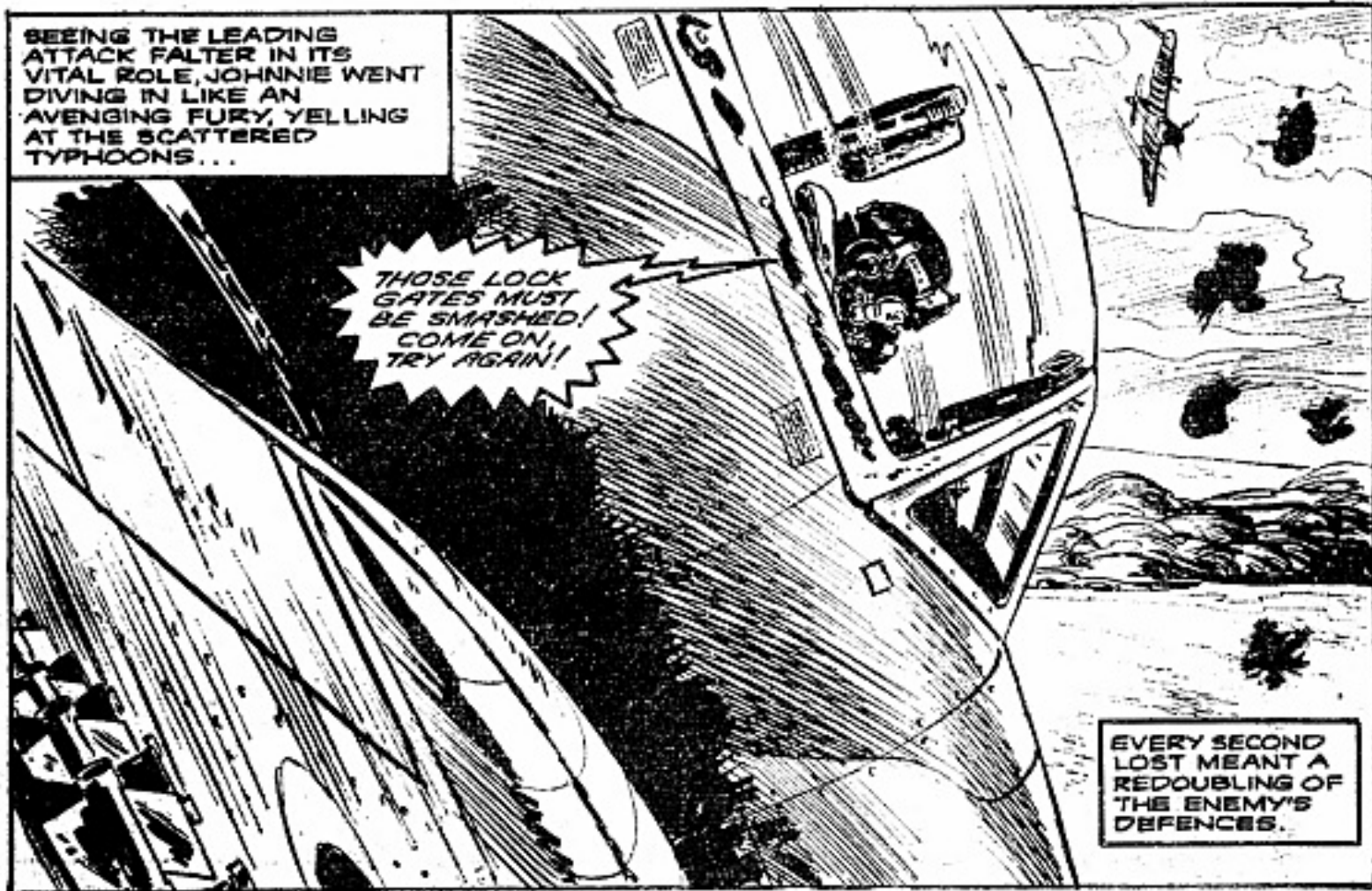
GOOD  
GRIEF!



SEEING THE LEADING  
ATTACK FALTER IN ITS  
VITAL ROLE, JOHNNIE WENT  
DIVING IN LIKE AN  
AVENGING FURY, YELLING  
AT THE SCATTERED  
TYPHOONS...

THOSE LOCK  
GATES MUST  
BE SMASHED!  
COME ON,  
TRY AGAIN!

EVERY SECOND  
LOST MEANT A  
REDOUBLING OF  
THE ENEMY'S  
DEFENCES.





WITH THE COURAGE OF DESPAIR, THE THREE FALTERING PILOTS FASTENED ON TO JOHNNIE'S TAIL AS HE SPED TOWARDS THE TARGET...

GET LOW!

NO ONE GUESSED THAT JOHNNIE'S SHARP COMMAND WAS MEANT AS MUCH FOR HIS OWN DREAD-FILLED MIND AS FOR THEM. NEVER DID THE EVIL-LOOKING WAVES LICK SO HUNGRILY CLOSE...

TIGHT-LIPPED, JOHNNIE STORMED THE HARBOUR GAP AND BORE DOWN ON THE LOCK-GATES. SIX OF HIS EIGHT ROCKETS SPED LIKE FIERY ARROWS...

GOT THEM!

HE WRENCHED THE TYPHOON INTO A TEARING CLIMB AND TWISTED TO SEE THE LOCK GATES CRUMBLING, AS SALVO AFTER SALVO GLAMMED HOME.



WITHIN THE U-BOAT PEN ITSELF, THE SUDDEN OUTPOURING OF PENT-UP WATER SPREAD INSTANT ALARM...

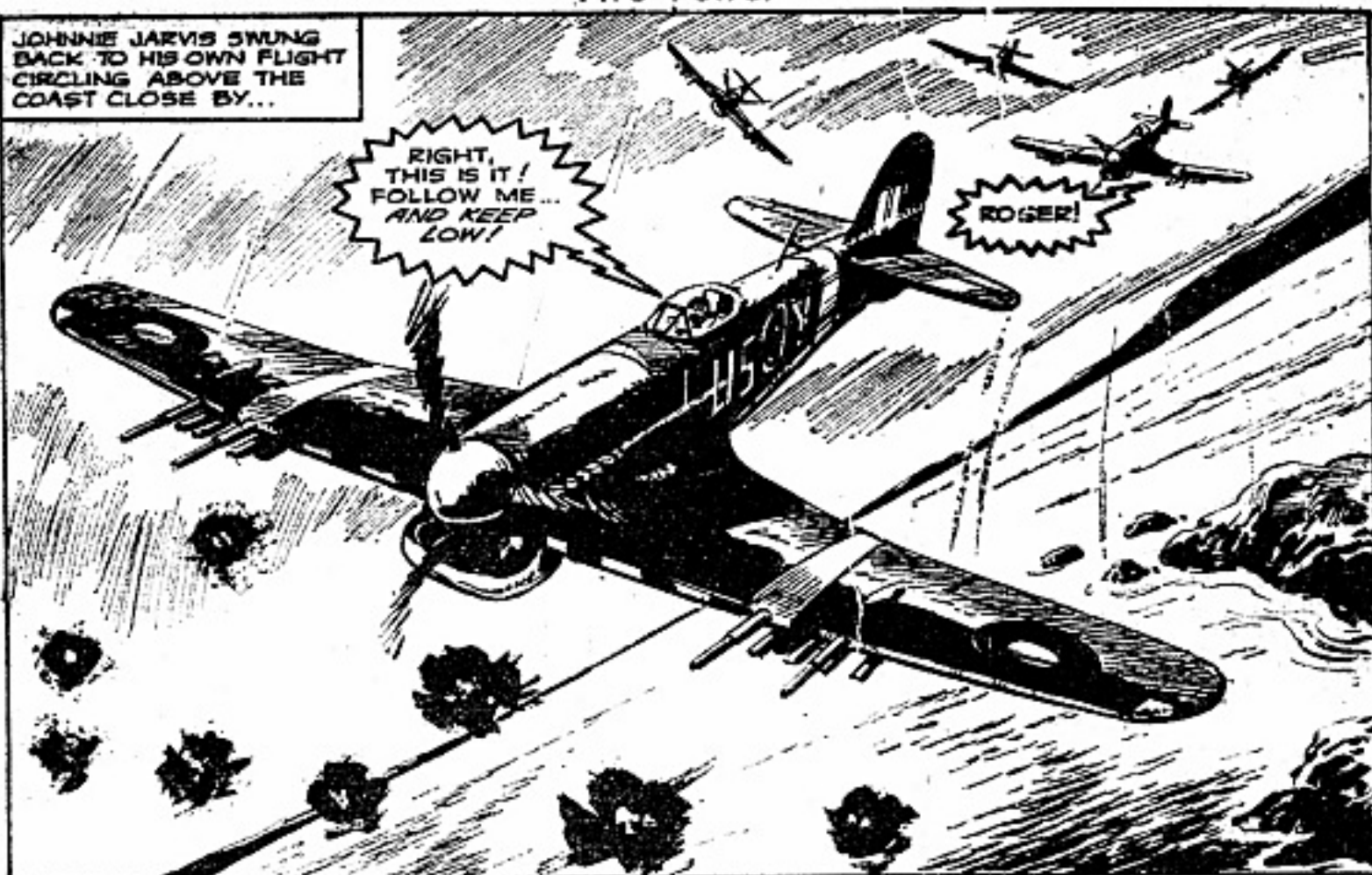




JOHNNIE JARVIS SWUNG  
BACK TO HIS OWN FLIGHT  
CIRCLING ABOVE THE  
COAST CLOSE BY...

RIGHT,  
THIS IS IT!  
FOLLOW ME...  
AND KEEP  
LOW!

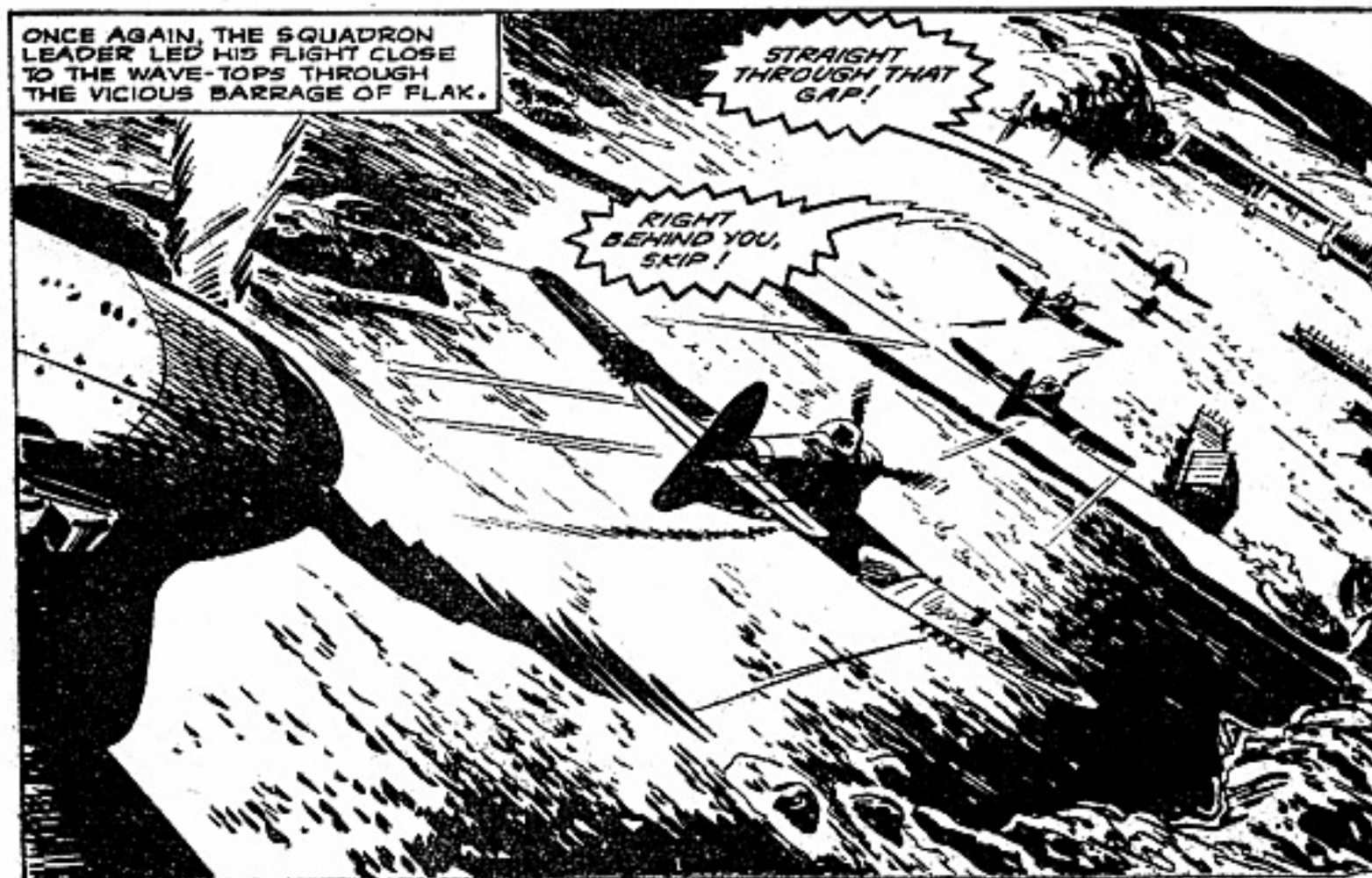
ROGER!



ONCE AGAIN, THE SQUADRON  
LEADER LED HIS FLIGHT CLOSE  
TO THE WAVE-TOPS THROUGH  
THE VICIOUS BARRAGE OF FLAK.

STRAIGHT  
THROUGH THAT  
GAP!

RIGHT  
BEHIND YOU,  
SKIP!



EYES NARROWED, JOHNNIE JUDGED THE GAP AHEAD AND ARROWED THROUGH...

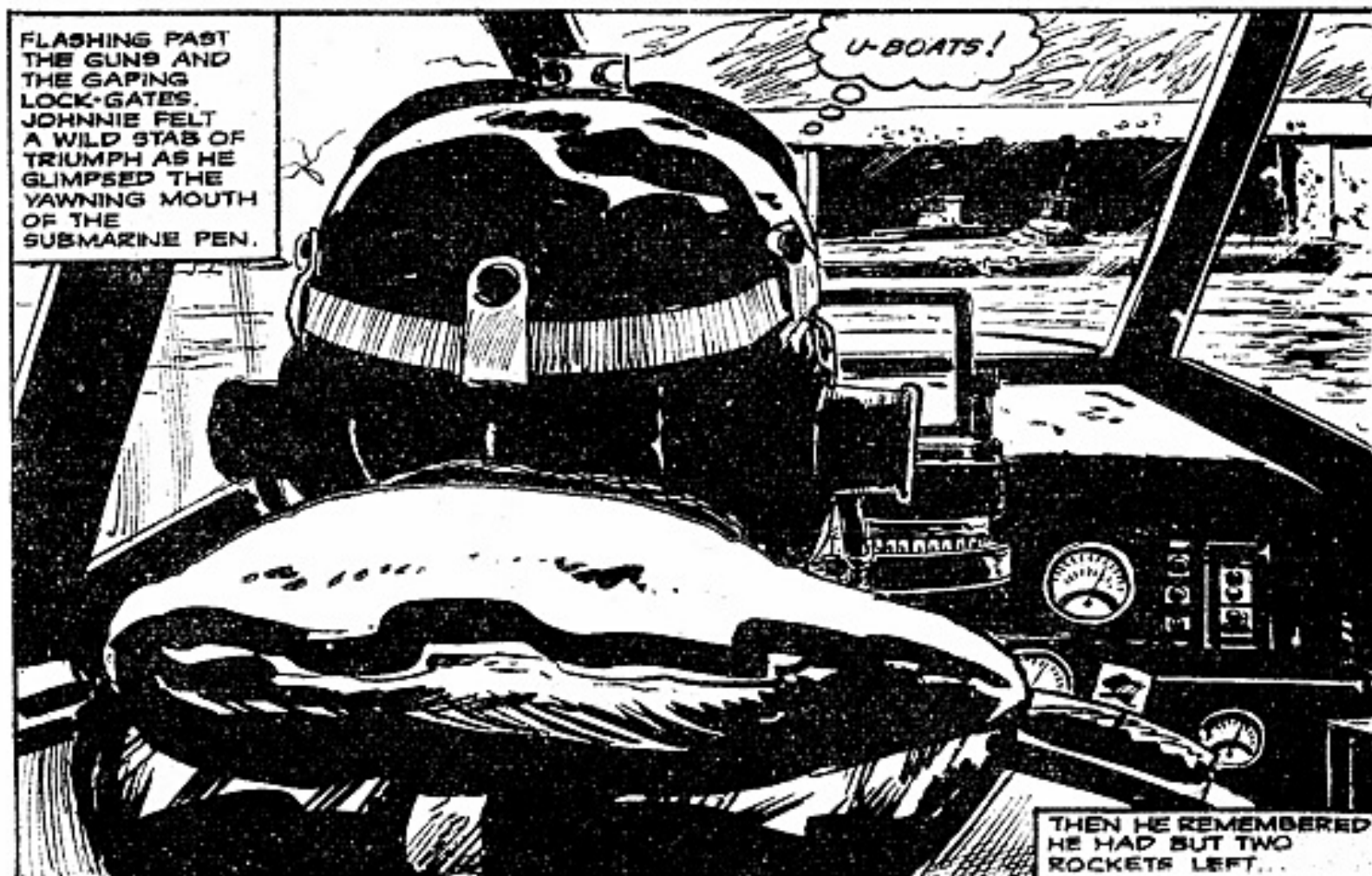
I'M GOING IN!



...BUT BEHIND HIM, PILOT OFFICER CRANE WAS ANOTHER WHO PAID THE SUPREME PRICE IN THE DESPERATE ATTACK...

FLASHING PAST THE GUNS AND THE GAPING LOCK-GATES, JOHNNIE FELT A WILD STAB OF TRIUMPH AS HE GLIMPSED THE YAWNING MOUTH OF THE SUBMARINE PEN.

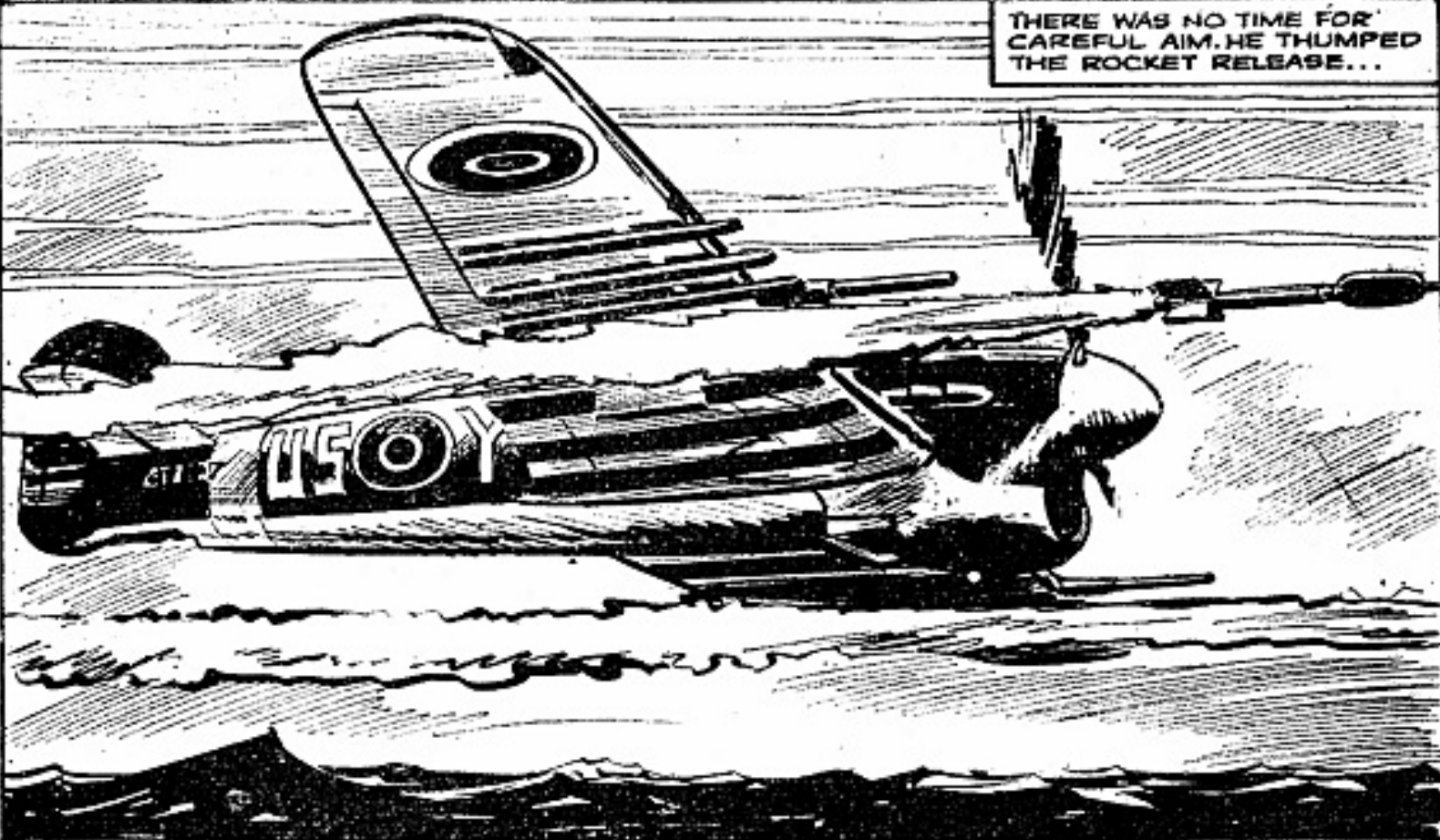
U-BOATS!



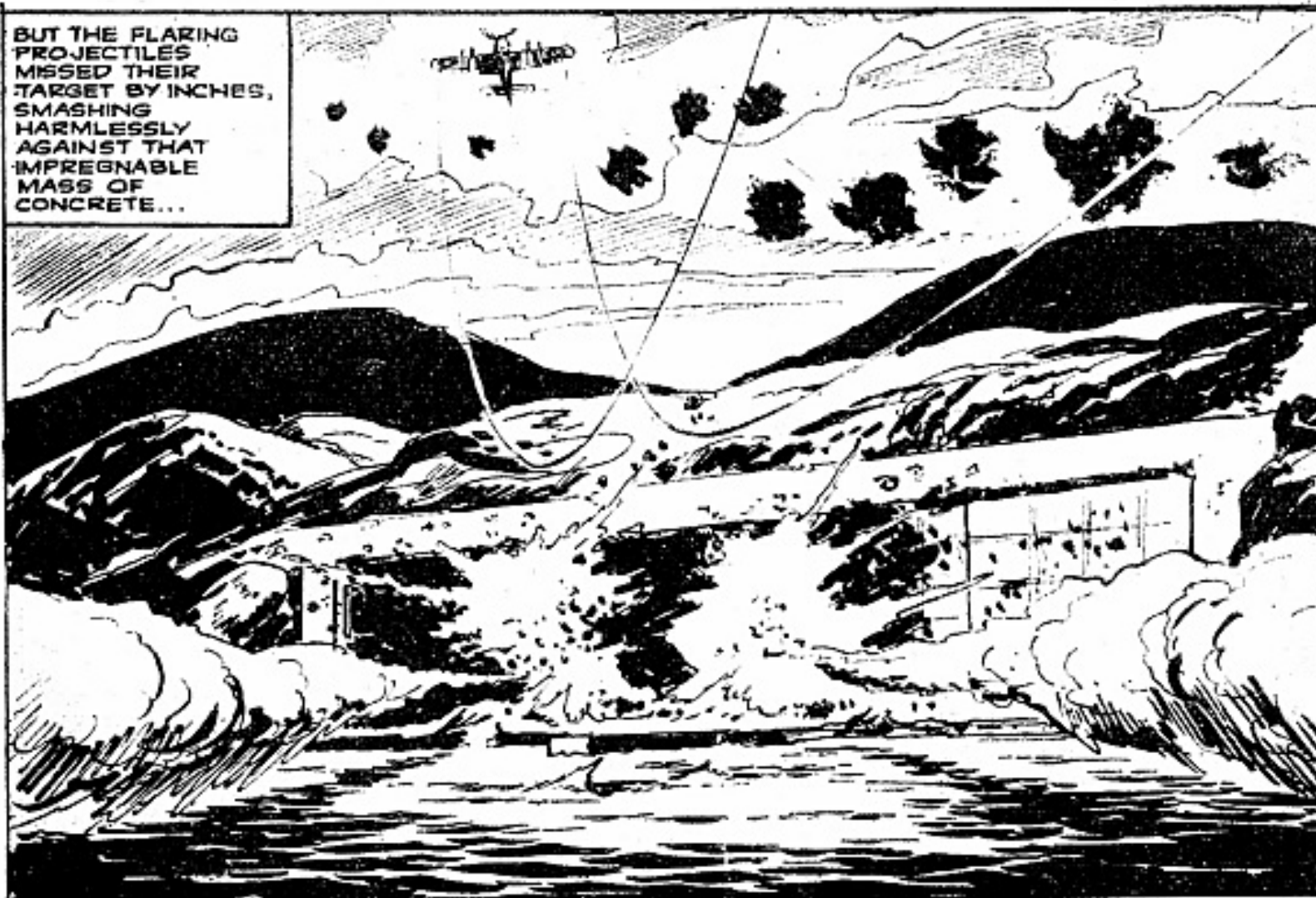
THEN HE REMEMBERED HE HAD BUT TWO ROCKETS LEFT...



THERE WAS NO TIME FOR CAREFUL AIM. HE THUMPED THE ROCKET RELEASE...



BUT THE FLARING PROJECTILES MISSED THEIR TARGET BY INCHES, SMASHING HARMLESSLY AGAINST THAT IMPREGNABLE MASS OF CONCRETE...



ANGRY WITH HIMSELF, JOHNNIE SWUNG CLEAR ONLY TO SEE THE FOLLOWING SALVO STRIKE SHORT INTO THE WATER...



BUT WORSE WAS TO FOLLOW. THE THIRD TYPHOON LIMPED OFF WITH A SHATTERED WING AND THE FOURTH HIT THE LOCK-GATES IN A BLINDING EXPLOSION...



THE LAST TWO PILOTS WERE FLUNG OFF THEIR MARK AND THEIR ROCKETS SOARED OFF INTO EMPTY AIR...



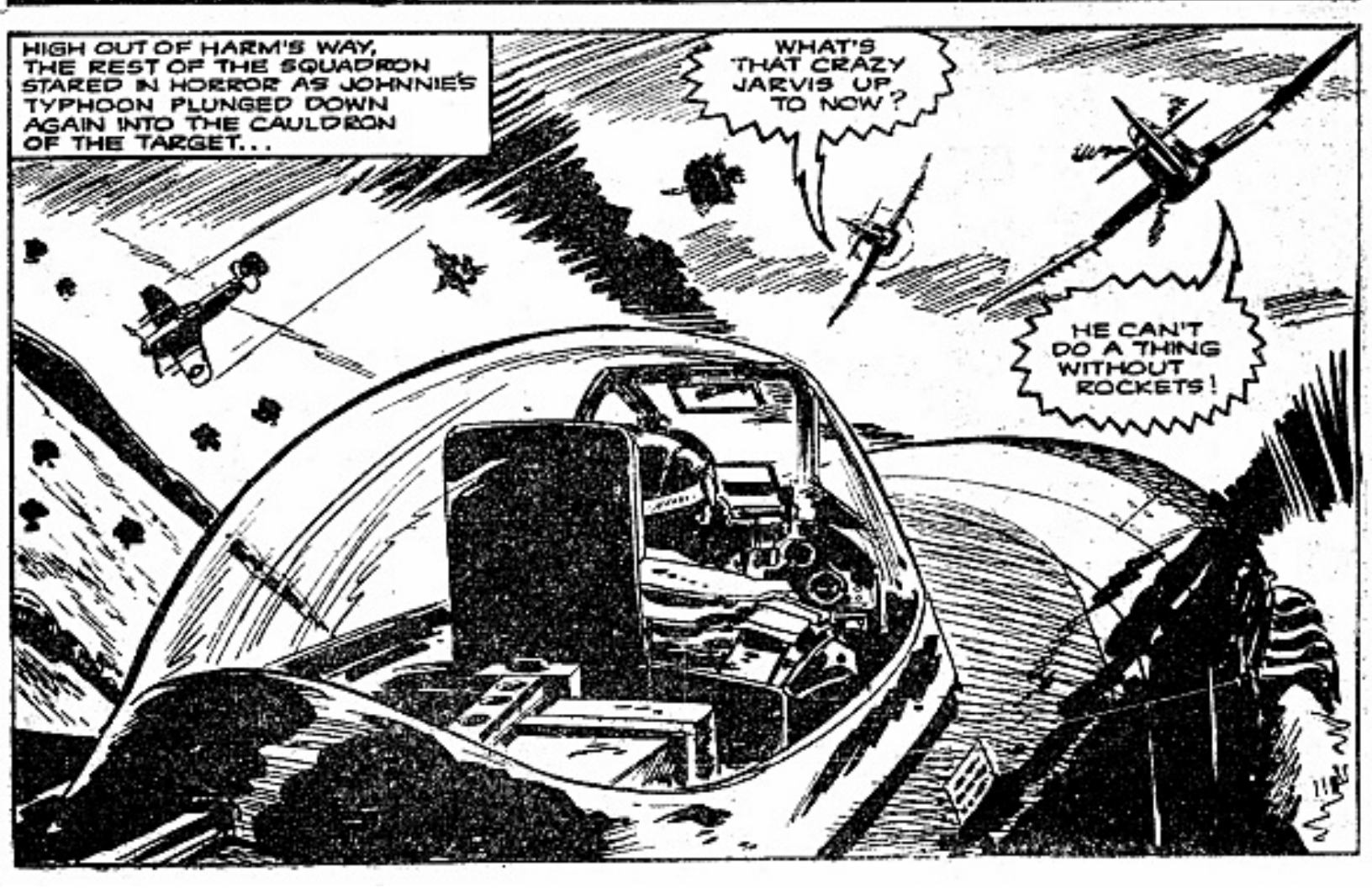




JOHNNIE GROANED IN DESPAIR,  
FOR THE AGONISING FACT  
HIT HIM LIKE AN ICE-COLD  
SHOCK OF WATER...

EVERY  
ROCKET GONE...  
AND THE U-BOATS  
AREN'T TOUCHED!  
WE'VE  
FAILED!

SOMETHING HAD TO BE DONE...  
SOMETHING DESPERATE...

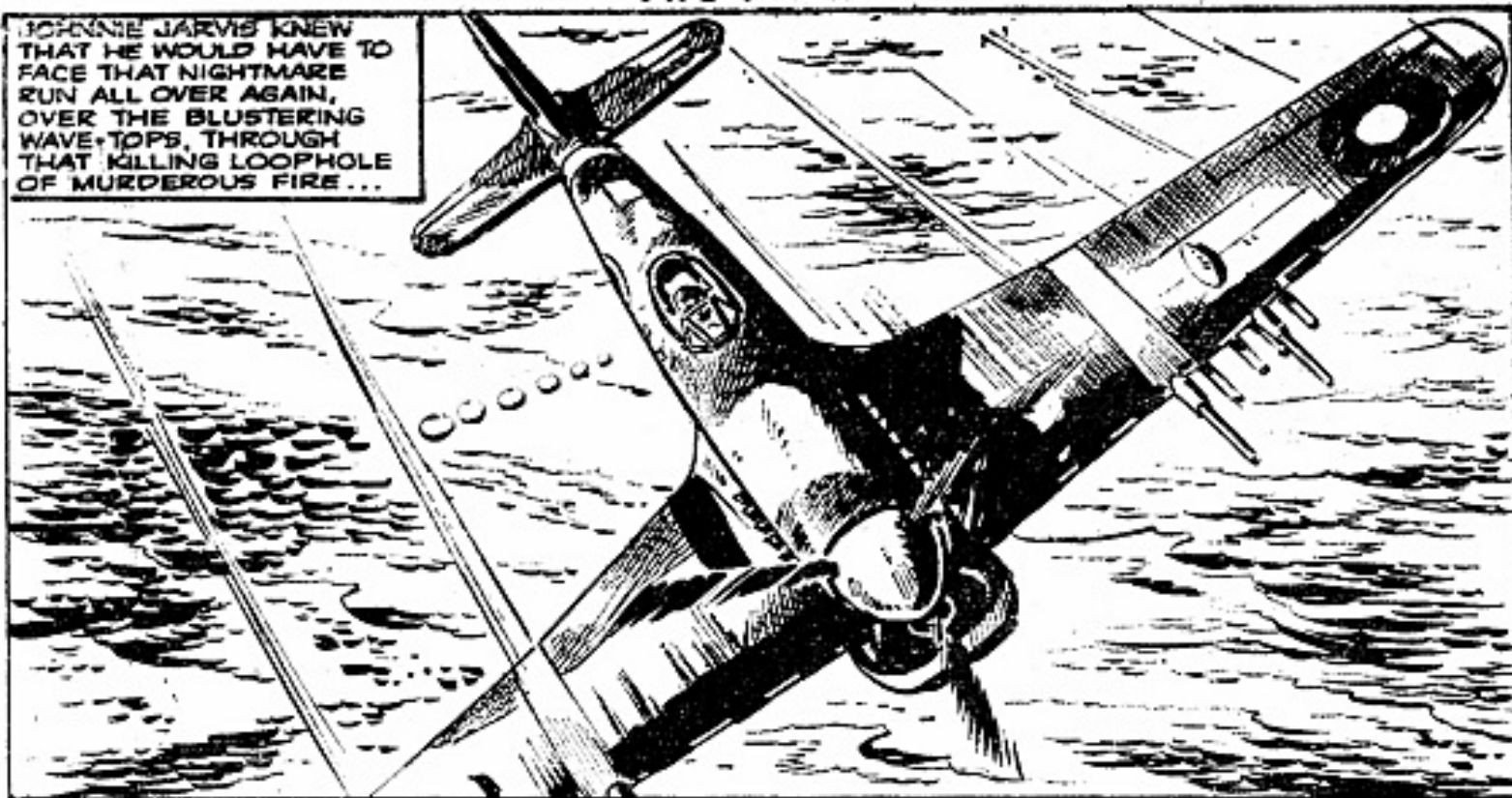


HIGH OUT OF HARM'S WAY,  
THE REST OF THE SQUADRON  
STARED IN HORROR AS JOHNNIE'S  
TYPHOON PLUNGED DOWN  
AGAIN INTO THE CAULDRON  
OF THE TARGET...

WHAT'S  
THAT CRAZY  
JARVIS UP  
TO NOW?

HE CAN'T  
DO A THING  
WITHOUT  
ROCKETS!

JOHNNIE JARVIS KNEW THAT HE WOULD HAVE TO FACE THAT NIGHTMARE RUN ALL OVER AGAIN, OVER THE BLUSTERING WAVE-TOPS, THROUGH THAT KILLING LOOPHOLE OF MURDEROUS FIRE...



SPRAY SMEARED JOHNNIE'S VISION, BULLETS THUDD AND TORE AT THE TYPHOON'S FRAME AND THE THUNDEROUS BELLOW OF THE POWERFUL MOTOR CRASHED AT HIS EARDRUMS...



NEXT INSTANT, THE MOTOR CHECKED, COUGHED, AND PICKED UP ONCE MORE, BUT IN THAT SPLIT SECOND, THE TYPHOON HAD SCOOPED SEA WATER WITH ITS WING-TIP...





IT TOOK ALL THE PILOT'S STRENGTH TO WRENCH THE SHUDDERING PLANE INTO LEVEL FLIGHT AGAIN. THEN, MIRACULOUSLY, HE WAS THROUGH THE FEARSOME GAP.



THE FOUR CANNONS BEGAN TO HAMMER DEFIANTLY...

THE DARK, GAPING MAW OF THE PEN WAS LARGE IN THE TYPHOON'S SIGHTS ~ AND JOHNNIE SAW HIS SHOTS SLAMMING INTO IT...

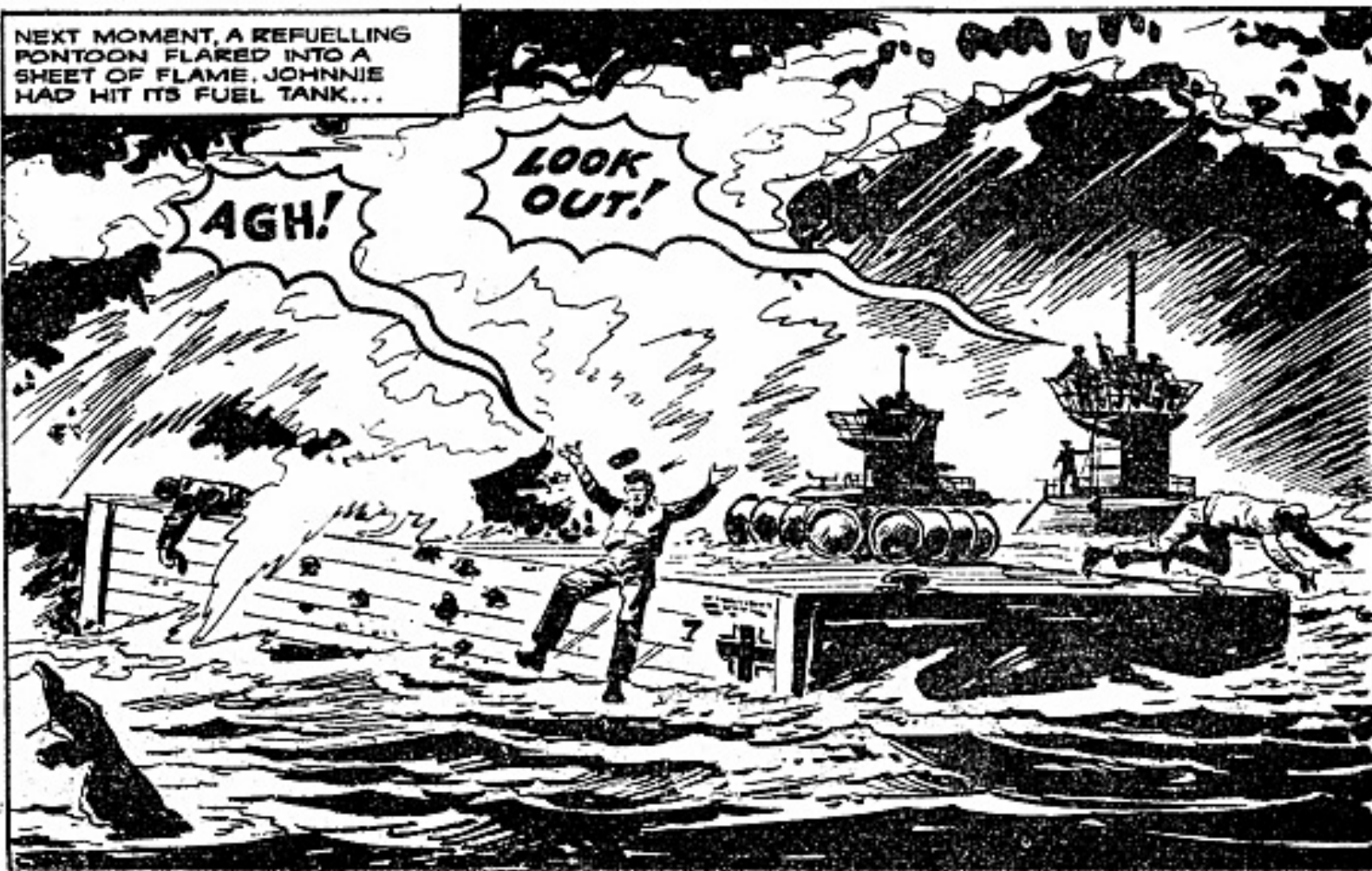
THIS IS IT ~ NOW OR NEVER!



NEXT MOMENT, A REFUELLING PONTOON FLARED INTO A SHEET OF FLAME. JOHNNIE HAD HIT ITS FUEL TANK...

AGH!

LOOK OUT!



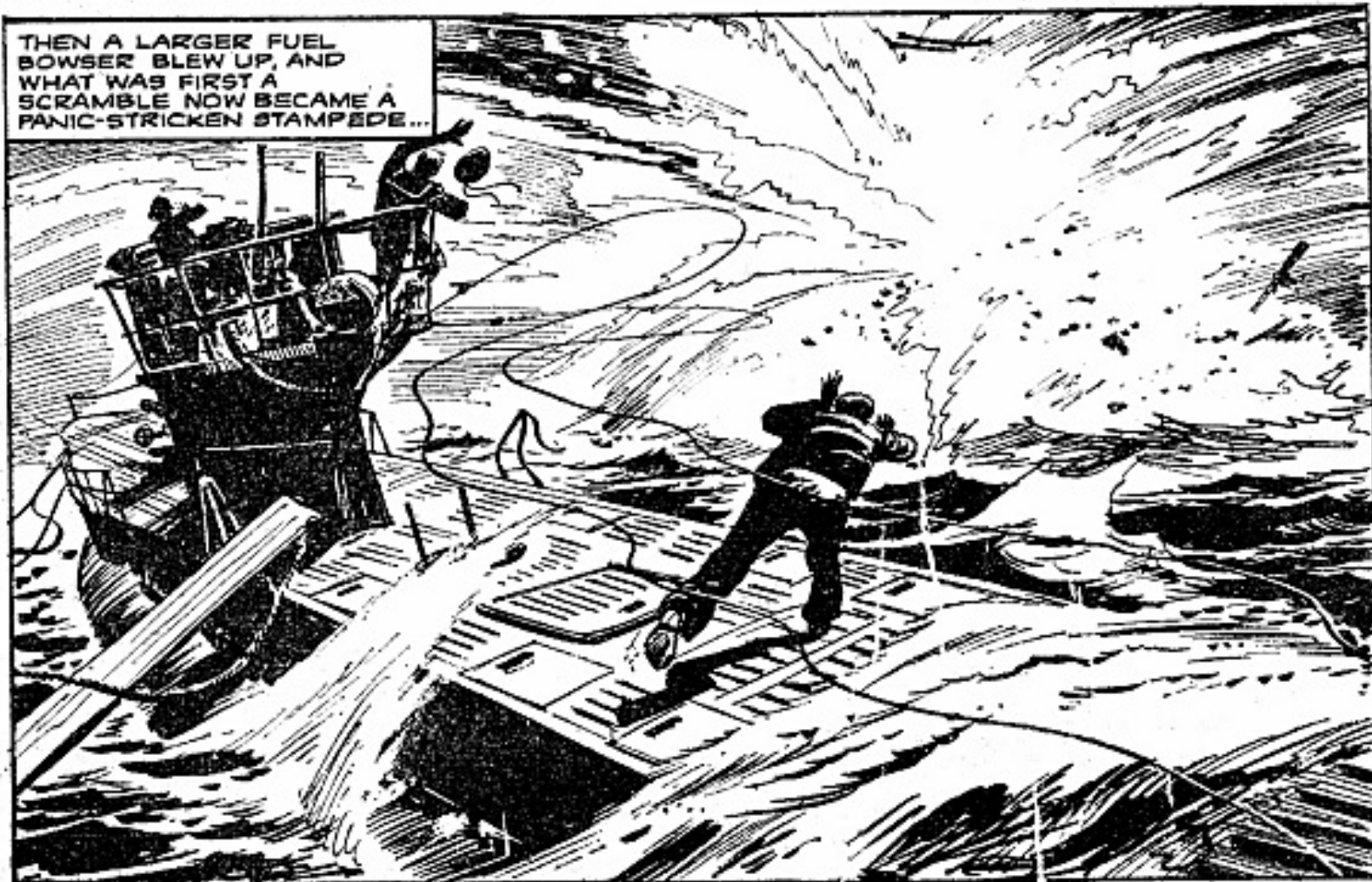


A SEARING ORANGE FLASH LIT THE DARKNESS OF THE CONCRETE CAVERN AS THE PONTOON BLEW UP, TOUCHING OFF A REFUELLING HOSE. A TORRENT OF LIQUID FIRE GUSHED INTO THE WATER...

HIMMEL!

RUN  
FOR YOUR  
LIVES!

THEN A LARGER FUEL  
BOWSER BLEW UP, AND  
WHAT WAS FIRST A  
SCRAMBLE NOW BECAME A  
PANIC-STRICKEN STAMPEDE...



JOHNNIE HAD FLUNG HIS PLANE SKYWARDS ONLY FEET FROM THE PEN AND BANKING ROUND, HE CAST A QUICK GLANCE BELOW...

EXPLOSIVES!  
MUST BE  
TORPEDOES  
GOING  
UP!

IT WAS SUCCESS FAR BEYOND HIS WILDEST HOPES...

THE BRIEF GLARE INSIDE THE SUBMARINE PEN SUDDENLY ERUPTED INTO A MIGHTY EXPLOSION AS THE MASSIVELY THICK ROOF SPLIT APART...





IN SOBER, THANKFUL RELIEF, JOHNNIE CLIMBED TO REJOIN HIS SQUADRON. THEN CAME AN OMINOUS CLATTER FROM BENEATH HIS ENGINE COWLING AND A STREAM OF SMOKE TRAILED FROM THE STUBBY EXHAUSTS.

SOMETHING'S WRONG!

SEA WATER, SCOOPED UP IN THAT PERILOUS RUN-UP, WAS WREAKING HAVOC WITH THE TYPHOON'S ENGINE.

THE CIRCLING SQUADRON HAD WATCHED JOHNNIE'S DARINGLY SUCCESSFUL ATTACK IN AWE AND IT WAS GRANT SCULLY WHO SENSED THAT SOMETHING WAS AMISS...

HEY, JARVIS IS IN TROUBLE!

THE HARD-HEADED CANADIANS GATHERED PROTECTIVELY ABOUT THEIR LEADER...

KEEP GOING, JOHNNIE!

WE'RE KEEPING OUR FINGERS CROSSED, SKIP!

THANKS, BOYS — BUT I SHALL HAVE TO DITCH HER SOON!

FOR SEVERAL MILES THEY CROWDED AROUND THE FAILING TYPHOON WHILE IT SANK LOWER AND LOWER TOWARDS THE HUNGRY WAVES.

THE SUBS WILL PICK ME UP. YOU CHAPS GET HOME... FUEL MUST BE GETTING SHORT.

NIX, JOHNNIE... WE'RE GONNER SEE YOU ON A SUB FIRST!



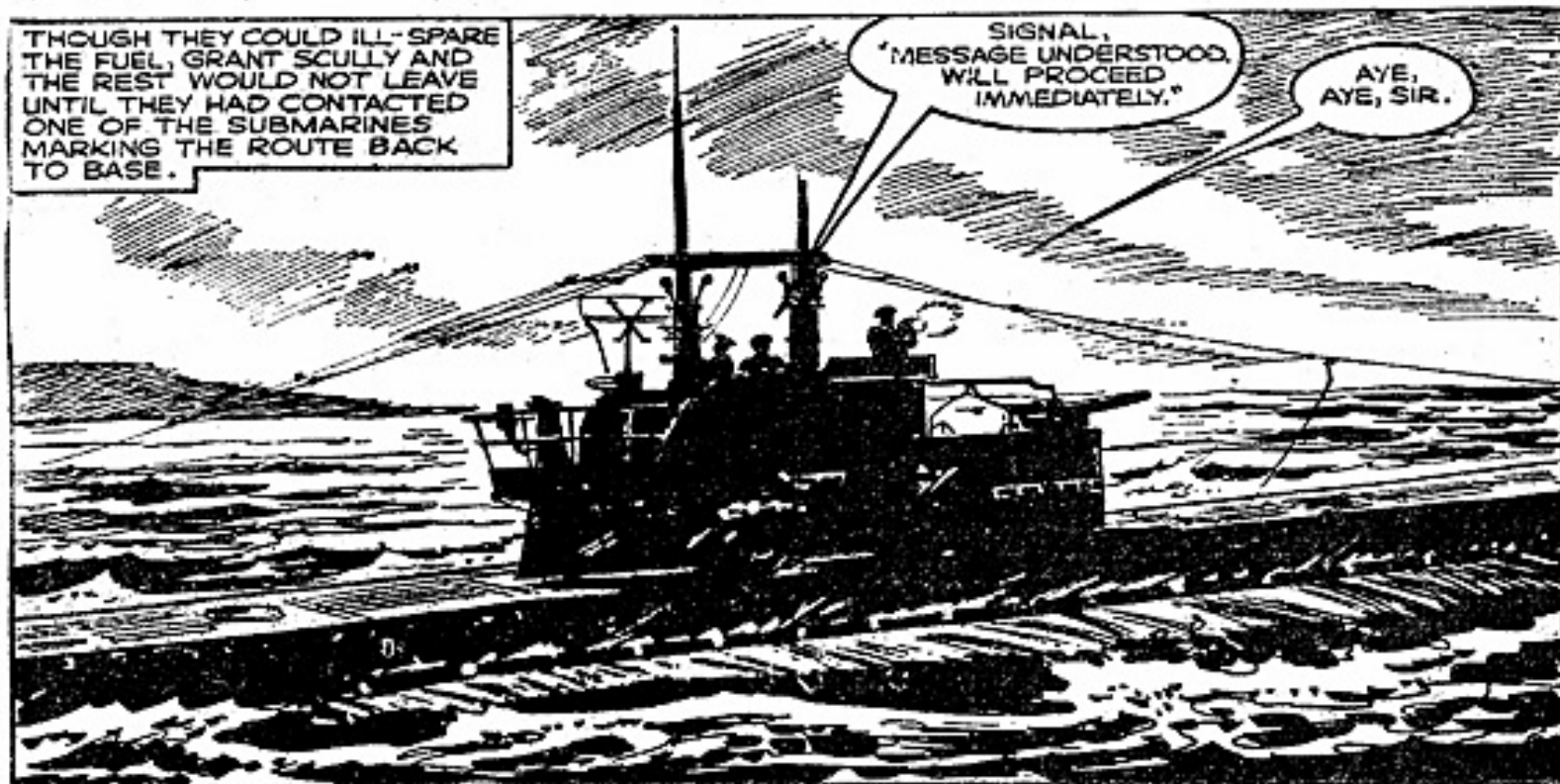
FIVE MORE MINUTES OF LIMPING FLIGHT AND JOHNNIE'S MOTOR COUGHED INTO A LAST AND FINAL SILENCE. HE CLAWED HIS WAY OUT OF THE COCKPIT AS THE FIGHTER BEGAN TO SPIN.



THOUGH THEY COULD ILL-SPARE THE FUEL, GRANT SCULLY AND THE REST WOULD NOT LEAVE UNTIL THEY HAD CONTACTED ONE OF THE SUBMARINES MARKING THE ROUTE BACK TO BASE.

SIGNAL, "MESSAGE UNDERSTOOD, WILL PROCEED IMMEDIATELY."

AYE, AYE, SIR.





SATISFIED, THE SQUADRON RACED BACK TO REASSURE THEIR WAVE-SOAKED LEADER, HIS YELLOW LIFE-JACKET SHOWING CLEARLY AGAINST THE DARK SEA. THEN, IN FINAL SALUTE, THEY DIPPED THEIR WINGS AND TURNED FOR BASE.

YOU KNOW, HE'S QUITE A GUY! MAYBE WE WERE A BUNCH OF DUMB SOUR-PUSSES, FELLERS!

I RECKON YOU'VE GOT SOMETHING THERE, GRANT!



IT WAS LONELY FOR JOHNNIE IN THE WATER WHEN THEY HAD GONE BUT BEFORE LONG, HE HEARD THE DEEP THROB OF THE SUBMARINE'S ENGINES...

AHOY, THERE!

AH! MY PASSAGE HOME... THANKS, SCULLY!



WATCHING THE SLEEK LINES OF THE SUBMARINE PUSH TOWARDS HIM, JOHNNIE JARVIS AT LAST FELT THAT PEACE WHICH COMES WITH DIFFICULTIES FACED AND CONQUERED.

A WEEK LATER, ON THAT EPIC 6TH. JUNE, 1944, SQUADRON LEADER JOHNNIE JARVIS WAS ABLE TO LOOK DOWN WITH AN EASY MIND ON THE GREATEST SEABORNE ASSAULT IN ALL HISTORY.



HIS SUPREMELY TOUGH TASK HAD PROVED TO BE THREE-FOLD — THE OVERCOMING OF HIS OWN FEARS, THE VANQUISHING OF PERSONAL ENMITY AND THE UTTER DESTRUCTION OF A LURKING MENACE TO THE INVASION SHIPS BELOW. JOHNNIE JARVIS COULD NEVER MAKE UP HIS MIND WHICH OF THE THREE GAVE HIM THE BIGGEST KICK.



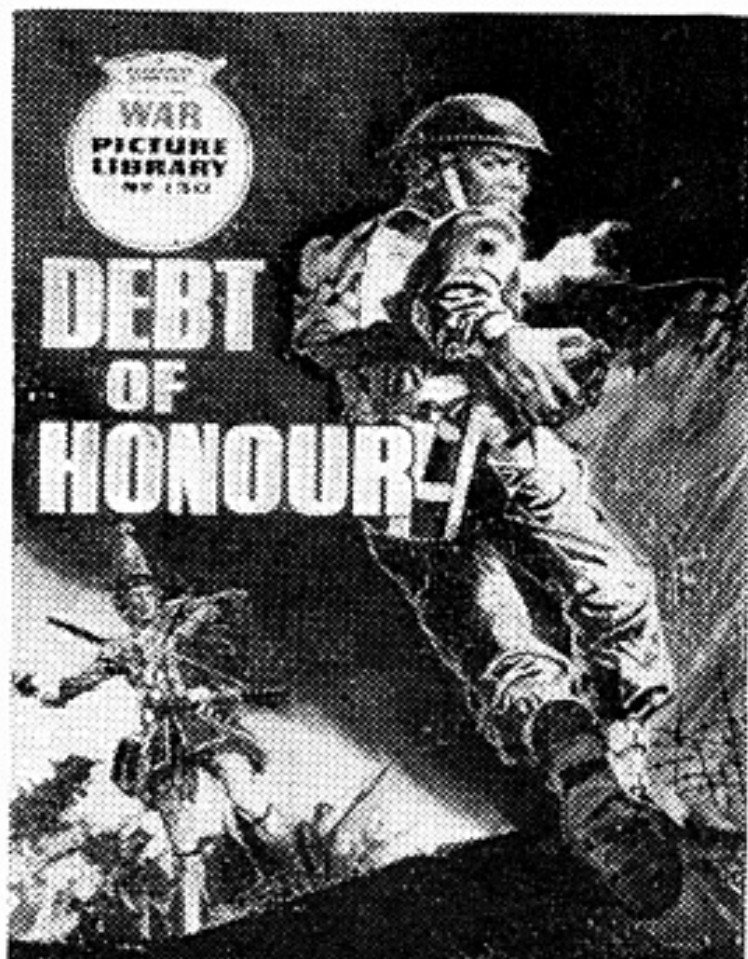
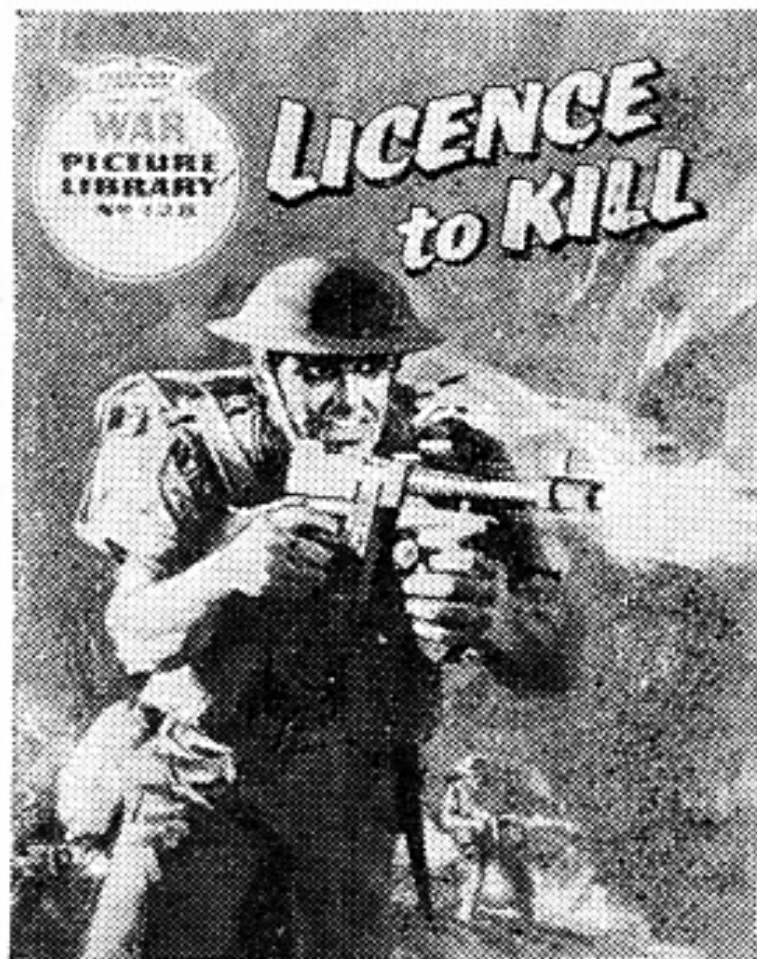
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Only when the odds were stacked against him did he appreciate the burden of command.

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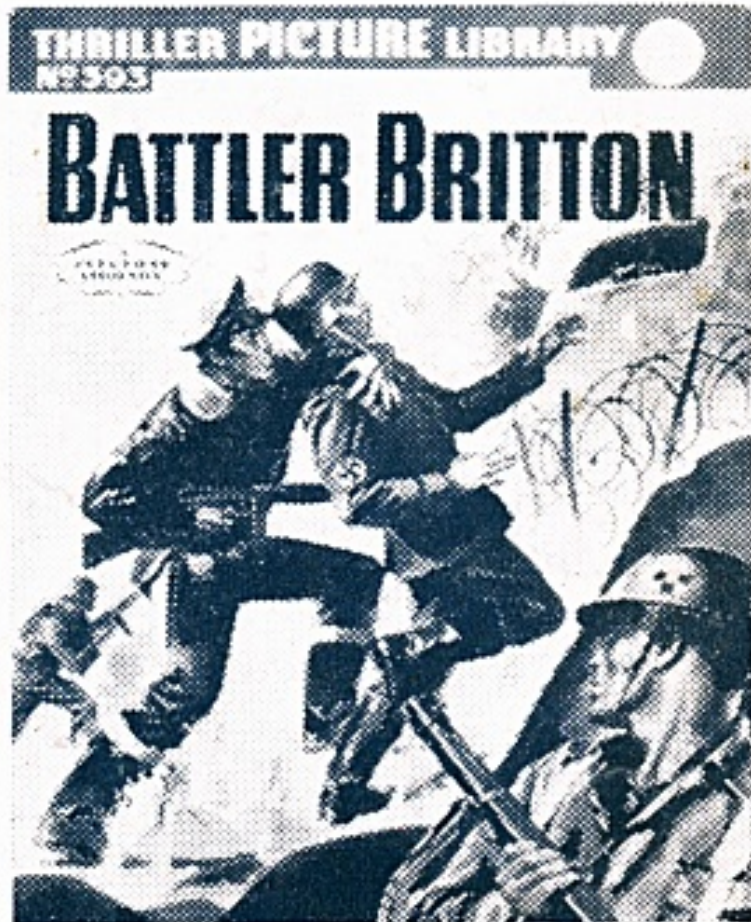


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